



Senate Majority Leader Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.) returns to his office at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, Dec. 28, 2012. President Obama said he expects Sen. Reid to put legislation on the floor to prevent tax increases on the middle class and extend unemployment if no compromise is reached over the 'fiscal cliff'.
(T.J. Kirkpatrick/The New York Times)

11th hour push to avoid 'fiscal cliff' under way

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama, pushing for a deal to avoid the looming tax hikes and spending cuts known as the "fiscal cliff," entered last-minute talks with Senate leaders Friday, saying he still believed an agreement could be reached before the Jan. 1 deadline. After Obama and the leaders of Congress held an hour-long, high-stakes meeting Friday afternoon to try to avoid the severe, automatic austerity mea-

sures that threaten to send the economy sputtering into another recession, the president called the gathering "good and constructive." "I'm optimistic we may still be able to reach an agreement that can pass both houses in time," Obama declared in a brief press conference. Obama referred to "dysfunction in Washington," and said the American public is "not going to have any patience for a politically self-inflicted wound to our economy.

Not right now." Surprisingly, after weeks of postelection gridlock, Senate leaders sounded even more bullish. The Republican Leader, Sen. Mitch McConnell, said he was "hopeful and optimistic" of a deal, adding he hoped a compromise could be presented to rank-and-file lawmakers as early as Sunday, a little more than 24 hours before the year-end deadline. Said Majority Leader Harry Reid: "I'm going to do

everything I can" to prevent the tax increases and spending cuts that threaten to send the economy into recession. He cautioned, "Whatever we come up with is going to be imperfect." If there is no compromise, Obama said he expects Reid to put legislation on the floor to prevent tax increases on the middle class and extend unemployment benefits — an implicit challenge to Republicans to dare to vote against what polls show is

popular. Officials said there was a general understanding that any agreement would block scheduled income tax increases for middle class earners while letting rates rise at upper income levels. The U.S. faces the fiscal cliff because tax rate cuts dating back to President George W. Bush's tenure expire at the end of the year.

Continued on Page 3

U.S. Senator Crapo will not fight DUI charge

**JOSH LEDERMAN
JOHN MILLER
Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. Sen. Michael Crapo, the Idaho Republican arrested on suspicion of drunken driving, doesn't plan to fight the charges when he appears in court in January, a spokesman said Friday.

Meanwhile, results from a secondary blood alcohol test performed at the jail show the conservative three-term senator registered a higher level about an hour after being arrested than when he was first tested by the police officer who stopped him.

Police have said Crapo registered a blood alcohol level of 0.11 percent when he was pulled over early Sunday in the Washington suburb of Alexandria, Va., after running a red light. But a secondary test per-

formed after Crapo was brought to the jailhouse — the one that will be used in court — registered at 0.14, nearly twice the legal limit, according to a law enforcement official with knowledge of the arrest. The official wasn't authorized to release information publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

"He does not plan to contest the charges," said Crapo spokesman Lindsay Nothorn, adding that Crapo has consulted with a local Virginia attorney ahead of his Jan. 4 court hearing.

Nothorn confirmed there had been a discrepancy in the blood alcohol tests, but said he was uncertain why they differed.

A blood alcohol level of 0.14 means Crapo tested 1/100 of a percentage point below the level that would have mandated jail time under Virginia law. The

legal limit in Virginia, which has strict drunken driving laws, is 0.08 percent.

Crapo has apologized and taken responsibility for the incident in a statement, but he hasn't spoken pub-



U.S. Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, at the Doubletree Riverside Hotel in Boise, Idaho. A spokesman for Sen. Crapo said Friday the Idaho Republican doesn't plan to fight his DUI charges when he appears in court in January.

(AP Photo/Matt Cilley)

licly about the arrest. Crapo returned to Washington from Idaho on Wednesday as lawmakers pursue a so-

lution to the looming fiscal cliff, but he wasn't immediately available to comment Friday.

A number of factors could explain the discrepancy between the preliminary

the jailhouse test, conducted just before 2 a.m. The higher level at the jailhouse could indicate Crapo was drinking shortly before getting behind the wheel and his body was still absorbing the alcohol. But another possible explanation is that blood alcohol testing simply isn't a perfect science, said Michael Hlastala, a breath testing expert and former physiology professor at the University of Washington.

"It could be consistent with rising blood alcohol levels," Hlastala said. "But it just depends on the way the person was breathing, and other factors." Alexandria police say Crapo was alone in his vehicle when he ran a red light, was pulled over and failed field sobriety tests. He was taken to the Alexandria jail and released on an unsecured \$1,000 bond about 5 a.m. Sunday. Crapo is sched-



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11th hour push to avoid 'fiscal cliff' under way

Continued from front

The pending across-the-board reductions in government spending, which will slice money out of everything from social programs to the military, were put in place last year as an incentive to both parties to find ways to cut spending. That solution grew out of the two parties' inability in 2011 to agree to a grand bargain that would have taken a big bite out of the deficit.

Facing a deadline that was born out of Washington's dysfunction, success was far from guaranteed — even on a slimmed-down deal that postponed hard decisions about spending cuts into 2013 — in a Congress where lawmakers grumbled about spending the new year holiday in the Capitol.

If Congress can't reach a broad deal to rein in deficit spending, Obama said Congress should allow a vote on a basic package that would preserve tax cuts for middle-class Americans while extending unemployment benefits for the long-term jobless and working toward a foundation for a broader deal. Republicans and Demo-



President Barack Obama pauses during a statement on the fiscal cliff negotiations with congressional leaders in the briefing room of the White House on Friday, Dec. 28, 2012 in Washington. The negotiations are a last ditch effort to avoid across-the-board first of the year tax increases and deep spending cuts.

crats say privately that any agreement would likely include an extension of middle-class tax cuts that had been set to expire at the end of the year, with increased tax rates at upper incomes — a priority that was central to Obama's re-election campaign.

A person familiar with the talks, who said the president was reviewing his pro-

posal from a week ago, when he urged lawmakers to preserve tax cuts for most while letting rates rise above incomes of \$250,000 a year. At the same time, Obama said lawmakers should extend unemployment benefits for the long-term jobless. The person was unauthorized to discuss the private meeting publicly and spoke on con-

dition of anonymity. House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner, House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, McConnell and Reid and were all attending Friday's White House meeting. Vice President Joe Biden and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner also attended. Obama's meeting with Congressional leaders —

the first since Nov. 16 — happened after the president cut short his Hawaiian holiday to return to Washington.

It likely centered on who would face higher tax rates, extending unemployment insurance and preventing a cut in federal Medicare payments to doctors, among other issues. "The clock is ticking," Sen. Max Baucus, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said in remarks on the Senate floor during the meeting. "My message to them is simple. We can do this. We can get this done, and we must."

For Obama, the eleventh-hour scramble represented a test of how he would balance strength derived from his re-election against an avowed commitment to compromise in the face of divided government. Despite early talk of a grand bargain between Obama and Boehner that would reduce deficits by more than \$2 trillion, the expectations were now far less ambitious. Adding pressure was this week's warning from Geithner that the government would hit its \$16.4 trillion borrowing limit on Monday, the final day of the year. □

(AP Photo/ Evan Vucci)

Mayor:

Keep 2 NY subway push deaths in perspective

TOM HAYS

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — For New York City, it wasn't an unusual sight: a possibly mentally ill woman pacing and mumbling to herself on an elevated subway station platform.

The woman eventually took a seat on a bench Thursday night, witnesses later said. Then, without any warning or provocation, she sprang up and used both hands to shove a man into the path of an oncoming train.

As police sought on Friday to locate the unidentified woman, Mayor Michael Bloomberg urged residents to keep the second fatal subway shove in the city this month in perspec-



Commuters wait for a train at the 40th Street-Lowery Street station in the Sunnyside neighborhood of the Queens borough of New York, Dec. 28, 2012. The police said a woman in her early 20s shoved a victim into the path of a No. 7 train at that station Thursday night. (Victor J. Blue/The New York Times)

tive. The news of the horrific death of a 46-year-old man from India came as the mayor touted drops in

the city's annual homicide and shooting totals.

"It's a very tragic case, but what we want to focus on

today is the overall safety in New York," Bloomberg told reporters following a police academy graduation.

The New York Police Department released a sketch of the woman and surveillance video of her fleeing the area and interviewed witnesses, including some who described her as acting agitated before the attack. Some witnesses said the man had been shielding himself from the cold by waiting in a stairwell before he ventured out onto the platform to see if the train was coming.

They also said he had no interaction with the woman, who immediately darted down a stairway after she pushed him.

One witness told police that the man had no time to try to save himself. The witness turned away to avoid seeing the man getting crushed on the tracks. Investigators identified the victim, who lived alone in

Queens, through a smart-phone and a prescription pill bottle he was carrying. They delayed releasing his name while they worked to notify his relatives in India. Detectives were following leads from the public generated by the video and were checking homeless shelters and psychiatric units in a bid to identify the woman, described as Hispanic, heavyset, about 5-foot-5 and in her 20s. It was unclear whether the woman and the man knew each other or whether the attack was simply the act of a deranged stranger.

The medical examiner said Friday that an autopsy found that the man died from head trauma.

Commuters on Friday expressed concern over subway safety. "It's just a really sad commentary on the world and on human beings, period," said Howard Roth, who takes the subway daily. □



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U.S. Congress extends foreign surveillance law

LARRY MARGASAK

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate gave final congressional approval Friday to a bill renewing the U.S. government's authority to monitor overseas phone calls and emails of suspected foreign spies and terrorists — but not Americans — without obtaining a court order for each intercept. The classified Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act program was on the brink of expiring by year's end. The 73-23 vote sent the bill to a supportive President Barack Obama, whose signature would keep the warrantless intercept program in operation for another five years.

The Senate majority rejected arguments from an unusual combination of Democratic liberals and ideological Republican conservatives, who sought to amend the bill to require the government to reveal statistics showing whether

any Americans were swept up in the foreign intercepts. The attempt lost, with 52 votes against and 43 in favor.

The Obama administration's intelligence community and leaders of the Senate's intelligence committee said the information should be classified and opposed the disclosure, repeating that it is illegal to target Americans without an order from a special U.S. surveillance court.

The group seeking more disclosures also sought — unsuccessfully — a determination by the government of whether any intelligence agency attempted to use information gained from foreigners to search for information on Americans without a warrant, referred to as "back-door" searches. The prohibition against targeting Americans without a warrant protects Americans wherever they are, in the United States or somewhere else. □

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Bush's health Is 'improving'

MICHAEL GRACZYK
Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — A family spokesman said Friday that former U.S. President George H.W. Bush, who has been hospitalized for more than a month, "continues to improve" but remained in intensive care at a Texas hospital.

"The President is alert and, as always, in good spirits — and his exchanges with doctors and nurses now include singing," family spokesman Jim McGrath said in a brief statement. Physicians remained "cautiously optimistic that the current course of treatment will be effective," McGrath added. Bush, the oldest living former U.S. president, has been hospitalized since Nov. 23. He was moved into intensive care on Sunday for treatment of a fever following a bronchitis-related cough.

Longtime aide Jean Becker said in a statement Thursday evening that Bush likely would advise well-wishers to "put the harps back in the closet."

Becker said "most of the civilized world" contacted her Wednesday after disclosures that Bush had been placed in the intensive care unit. □

Woman charged in connection with 2 slayings

WEBSTER, New York (AP) — The convicted felon who ambushed firefighters on Christmas Eve, killing two, couldn't legally buy the

Friday and faces a federal charge of knowingly making a false statement for signing a form indicating she would be the legal

chase of an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle and a 12-gauge shotgun that William Spengler had with him Monday when firefighters

to that gun, Newell said. Hochul said Nguyen bought the guns on June 6, 2010, on behalf of Spengler, who as a convicted felon was barred from possessing weapons.

"She told the seller of these guns, Gander Mountain in Henrietta, New York, that she was to be the true owner and buyer of the guns instead of William Spengler," he said. "It is absolutely against federal law to provide any materially false information related to the acquisition of firearms."

"It is sometimes referred to acting as a straw purchaser and that is exactly what today's complaint alleges," Hochul said.

The .223-caliber Bushmaster rifle, which had a combat-style flash suppressor, is similar to the one used by the gunman who massacred 20 children and six women in a Newtown, Connecticut, elementary school earlier this month.

Nguyen and her mother, Dawn Welsher, lived next door to Spengler in 2008. On Wednesday and again on Friday, shortly before her arrest, she answered her cellphone and told The Associated Press that she didn't want to talk about Spengler. Her brother, Steven Nguyen. □



Dawn Nguyen is escorted into the Federal Building, Friday, Dec. 28, 2012, in Rochester, N.Y., and charged in connection with the guns used in the Christmas Eve ambush slaying of two volunteer firefighters responding to a house fire in Webster, N.Y.

(AP Photo/Democrat & Chronicle, Jamie Germano)

guns he used but he picked out the semiautomatic rifle and shotgun and was in the sporting goods store with a neighbor's daughter when she bought them for him, police said Friday.

The woman, Dawn Nguyen of Rochester, was arrested

owner of the guns, U.S. Attorney William Hochul said. She also was charged with a state count of filing a falsified business record, State Police Senior Investigator James Newell said.

Newell said the charges are connected to the pur-

Michael Chiapperini and Tomasz Kaczowka were gunned down.

Three other people were wounded before the 62-year-old Spengler killed himself. He also had a .38-caliber revolver, but Nguyen is not connected



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In a 5-year comparison, U.S. recovery fares well

FLOYD NORRIS

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Five years ago, the world economy seemed to be doing fine.

But it wasn't. The fourth quarter of 2007 was the peak for the U.S. economy. It began a mild recession in early 2008 that turned into a severe one by late in the year, when the credit crisis spread to most of the world. A few countries escaped recession, but virtually none was able to avoid severe bear markets in stocks.

In some countries, including the largest developing economies in Asia, their GDP charts show no indication that bad things ever happened. China's GDP growth slowed a bit, and may be slowing more now,

but it never came close to recession.

By the third quarter of 2012 China's gross domestic product, measured in local currency and adjusted for inflation, was 50 percent larger than it had been at the end of 2007. The economies of India and Indonesia had each grown by 30 percent.

At the other end of the spectrum, some major economies are smaller now than they were then, with little indication that they will completely recover any time soon. The Italian and Spanish economies, hurt by their inability to compete with Germany in export markets, continue to decline. Spain's economy is smaller than it was in 2005, while Italy's has fallen be-

low 2003 levels.

Both would be doing better if they were able to devalue their currencies against Germany's, but they can-

tries. Poland's economy has grown by about 15 percent, measured in local currency, as the value of the zloty fell sharply in late

economies have showed good growth over the last five years, their stock markets have not done well. In early 2008, China's market broke sharply lower, leading to fears that a world recession might begin there. Nothing like that happened, but the stock market has yet to fully recover. The U.S. has perhaps the best combined record of major developed economies.

Its GDP is 2.5 percent larger than it was at the end of 2007 – a smaller gain than was shown in Australia, Canada or Germany – but its stock market is closer to recovering all the lost ground than the markets in any of those countries.

MSCI, a research company that compiles stock indexes based on all major stocks in each country, reports that its All Country World Index is now 16 percent lower than it was five years ago. □



Construction worker Elabert Salazar works on a house frame for a new home in Chula Vista, Calif. If Washington lawmakers can get past the "fiscal cliff," many analysts say that the outlook for stocks in 2013 is good, as a recovering housing market and an improving jobs outlook helps the economy maintain a slow, but steady recovery. (AP Photo/Gregory Bull)

not because they share the euro.

Not being in the euro has been critical to the success of some European coun-

2008 and has yet to fully recover against the euro. That has made its exports more competitive.

While some developing

EPA job opening triggers speculation

JENNIFER A. DLOUHY

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WASHINGTON – Lisa Jackson's decision to step down as administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency sets off a Washington guessing game over who President Obama will pick to replace her.

Jackson's move is not a surprise; she has been a lightning rod for criticism lobbed by Republicans and oil industry leaders who insist the EPA has too aggressively tried to regulate pollution from drilling, refining and burning fossil fuels.

Any EPA administrator – including Jackson – also is subject to criticism from environmental advocates for weakening environmental protections or going too slowly to advance new

safeguards. During Jackson's tenure, congressional aides sometimes joked that the EPA head spent more time on Capitol Hill than the lawmakers who frequently called her to testify.

The next EPA administrator is likely to oversee high-profile policy governing greenhouse gas emissions from power plants and refineries and low-sulfur transportation fuel. The agency could play a key role in regulating the use of hydraulic fracturing technology being used to unlock natural gas and oil previously trapped in dense rock formations.

Any potential replacement could be in for a tough confirmation battle, as senators use debate over the nominee to highlight their opposition to the Obama admin-

istration's environmental policies. Back in October, Dan Weiss, a fellow with the Center for American Progress Action Fund, predicted that "Senate Republicans could wage pitched confirmation battles to bully the administration into weakening public health safeguards." He added:

"The Republicans may use this opportunity to squeeze commitments from the president to weaken public health protections he put in place during the first term." Obama might seek to elevate existing agency leaders or tap state regulators to fill the top EPA post. Here is a look at some of the contenders:

@
 — Bob Perciasepe, deputy EPA administrator. □



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Port strike averted after partial deal with labor union

STEVEN GREENHOUSE
© 2012 New York Times
A top federal mediator announced Friday that shipping companies and the East Coast longshoremen's union have reached a deal on their main point of dispute and that the union has agreed to drop its threat of a coastwide strike this Sunday. The mediator said the two sides have agreed to extend the existing contract by 30 days – to Jan. 28 – to try to reach agreement on other remaining issues, including what the companies say are antiquated work rules. The partial agreement means that the union, the International Longshoremen's Association, will not carry through on its threat to have 14,500 dockworkers go on strike this Sunday at 14 ports stretching from Boston to Houston. "While some significant issues remain, I am cautiously

optimistic that they can be resolved in the 30-day extension period," said the mediator, George H. Cohen, the director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. In a news release, Cohen said the two sides had



Cargo ships docked at Port Elizabeth, N.J. A top federal mediator announced Friday that shipping companies and the East Coast longshoremen's union have reached a deal on their main point of dispute and that the union has agreed to drop its threat of a coastwide strike this Sunday.
(Librado Romero/The New York Times)

reached an agreement in principle on a particularly contentious issue, known as "container royalty payments." The companies share those payments with union members for each ton of cargo handled. The union had for months de-

nounced the companies' proposal to freeze those payments for current longshoremen and eliminate them for all future hires. The United States Maritime Alliance, a group of shipping companies and terminal owners, says it paid \$211 million in container royalties to the dock workers last year, averaging \$15,500 per eligible union member. James A. Capo, the alli-

ance's chairman, said the royalty payments amounted to \$10 an hour on top of what he said were already generous wages. "This issue seems to have dwarfed anything else," Capo said in an interview this week. The maritime alliance said the longshoremen earn \$124,000 a year on average in wages and benefits, including the royalty payments.□

Smuggling tunnel found near US border

A. GOMEZ LICON
Associated Press
US/MEXICO BORDER (AP) — Mexican authorities have discovered a sophisticated smuggling tunnel equipped with electricity and ventilation not far from the Nogales port of entry into Arizona, U.S. and Mexican officials said Friday. The Mexican army said the tunnel was found Thursday after authorities received an anonymous call in the border city of Nogales, Sonora, south of Arizona. U.S. law enforcement officials confirmed that the Mexican military had discovered the football field-long tunnel with elaborate electricity

and ventilation systems. U.S. Border Patrol spokesman Victor Brabble said the tunnel did not cross into the U.S. The army said the anonymous caller was reporting gunmen standing outside a two-story house in a hilly neighborhood near the international bridge where motorists travel between Mexico and the United States. Inside the house, soldiers discovered a fake wall inside a storage closet under a staircase that led to a dark room with buckets and clothes. After lifting a drain cover in that room, soldiers found another

staircase at the entrance of the tunnel that went 16 feet underground and measured a yard in diameter. Light bulbs lit the underground passage and pipes stretched across the 120-yard tunnel that Mexican army officials believe was built to smuggle drugs. It was unclear whether officials made any arrests, but the house where the tunnel was found was seized by the local government. Military officials did not say how long they believed the tunnel had been under construction, but authorities say it can take six months to a year to build such a passage.□

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Rebels besiege airports in north Syria

BEN HUBBARD
Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian rebels stepped up their siege of a government helicopter base and clashed with soldiers near Aleppo's international airport on Friday, part of an effort to chip away at the air power that poses the biggest challenge to their advances against the regime of President Bashar Assad.

That airborne threat came into stark relief the same day, when a government airstrike on a northern town killed 14 people — most of them women and children, activists said. More than 21-months into Syria's conflict, the Assad regime is counting more than ever on its air force to block rebel gains. Rebels in the north, a region largely clear of government troops, realize this and have launched campaigns to seize all the area's airports, hoping such a move will protect their forces and the civilians who back them. This push in many ways represents the mismatched nature of Syria's civil war, with numerous but lightly armed rebels fighting a highly sophisticated army, albeit one

badly weakened by defections. Rebels say they have surrounded four airports in the northern province of Aleppo. In recent days, they have posted dozens of videos online showing fighters shooting mortars, homemade rockets and sniper rifles at targets inside the bases. It remains unclear whether

considered the most important thing the rebels can focus on because all of the strikes now come from the air," said Aleppo activist Mohammed Saeed via Skype. Saeed said clashes between rebels and government soldiers raged until Friday morning around the Mannagh helicopter base near the Turkish border.



A Free Syrian Army fighter takes cover during fighting with the Syrian Army in Azaz, Syria. (AP Photo/Virginie Nguyen Huang)

er rebels will be able to seize any of the bases soon, but they have managed to stop air traffic at one and limit movement at others by firing on all approaching aircraft with heavy machine guns.

"The airports are now

He said other rebel groups continued to hold positions around the Kuwiras military airport southwest of the city of Aleppo and clashed with soldiers near Aleppo's international airport and neighboring Nerab military airport. □

Indian gang rape victim dies in Singapore clinic

HEATHER TAN
Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — A young Indian woman who was gang-raped and severely beaten on a bus in New Delhi died Saturday at a Singapore hospital, after her horrific ordeal galvanized Indians to demand greater protection from sexual violence that impacts thousands of women daily, in homes, streets and public transport, but which often goes unreported. She "passed away peacefully" with her family and officials of the Indian embassy by her side," said Dr. Kevin Loh, the chief executive of Mount Elizabeth hospital where she had been treated since Thursday. "The Mount Elizabeth Hospital team of doctors, nurses and staff join her family in mourning her loss," he said in a statement. He said the woman had remained in an extremely critical condition since Thursday when she was

flown to Singapore from India. "Despite all efforts by a team of eight specialists in Mount Elizabeth Hospital to keep her stable, her condition continued to deteriorate over these two days. She had suffered from severe organ failure following serious injuries to her body and brain. She was courageous in fighting for her life for so long against the odds but the trauma to her body was too severe for her to overcome." The woman and a male friend, who have not been identified, were traveling in a public bus after watching a film on the evening of Dec. 16 when they were attacked by six men who took turns to rape her. They also beat the couple and inserted an iron rod into her body resulting in severe organ damage. Both of them were then stripped and thrown off the bus, according to police. Indian police have arrested six people in connection with the attack, which left the victim with severe internal injuries, a lung infection and brain damage. □

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AROUND THE WORLD

New US arrest in Okinawa: trespassing

TOKYO (AP) — A U.S. Marine was arrested Friday on trespassing charges in Japan's southwestern island of Okinawa, where public outrage is growing against the American military following a rape allegedly by servicemen. Anibal Antonio Barraza-Ortiz, 27, a Marine corporal assigned to Camp Hansen base, is suspected of having entered the veranda of an apartment in Naha city and was arrested in a drunken state early Friday on a nearby rooftop, police said. No hometown was given. "We will fully cooperate with authorities in their investigation," Lt. Col. David Honchul said. Okinawa houses more than half the U.S. troops in Japan under a bilateral security alliance. □

Thousands protest air strikes in Turkey

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — An official says thousands are protesting the government on the first anniversary of a botched Turkish military air strike aimed at Kurdish rebels that instead killed 34 civilians. Protesters are denouncing the government's failure to keep a promise to investigate the incident and hold those responsible for the attack that struck a group of smugglers — most of them youngsters — who were crossing the border into Turkey from Iraq with mules. Kurdish legislator Nazmi Gur said people were marching Friday to a cemetery near the border with Iraq. News footage showed protesters shouting anti-government slogans. □

Chile charges 8 people in singer's killing

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Eight former army lieutenants have been charged in the killing of communist singer and songwriter Victor Jara almost four decades ago. Appellate Court Magistrate Miguel Vazquez also ordered the arrest of Hugo Sanchez Marmonti and Pedro Barrientos Nunez, who lives in the U.S. state of Florida, as the authors of the killing, and the other six former military officials as accomplices. All have been detained except Barrientos. Jara was detained along with many others at Chile's State Technical University the day after the Sept. 11, 1972 coup that toppled President Salvador Allende. His body was found riddled with bullets and bearing signs of torture. □

Berlusconi to pay ex €3 million a month

ROME (AP) — An Italian newspaper has reported the details of the divorce settlement between ex-Premier Silvio Berlusconi and his second wife Veronica Lario, saying he must pay her €3 million a month alimony but gets to keep their estate. Corriere della Sera said Friday the paperwork was filed Christmas Day at Milan's tribunal. Lario announced she was divorcing the billionaire media mogul in 2009, citing his presence at the 18th birthday party of a Naples girl and his fondness for younger women. The couple met in a dressing room in 1980 after Berlusconi saw Lario perform in a Milan theater, were married in 1990 and have three grown children. □

Japan FM urging diplomacy with China

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's new foreign minister says both Tokyo and Beijing should calm down and communicate in order to mend their souring relations. Fumio Kishida says the first step toward reconciliation is to communicate. He said he is willing to hold talks with his Chinese counterpart. Kishida said he is aware that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government has a right-wing image. He told reporters Friday that he will make sure to avoid misunderstandings. Relations between Japan and China deteriorated this year after Tokyo nationalized islands in the East China Sea that it effectively controls but are also claimed by China. □

Yemen airstrike kills 2 Qaida suspects

AHMED AL-HAJ Associated Press SANAA, Yemen (AP) — An airstrike killed two suspected al-Qaida militants in Yemen on Friday while tribesmen with links to the group were believed to be behind an attack on an oil pipeline elsewhere in the country, Yemeni security officials said. Officials and residents suspect that the strike in the southeastern province of Hadramawt was carried out by a U.S. drone. Washington considers al-Qaida in Yemen the group's most dangerous branch and has carried out drone strikes that have killed militants there before. Yemeni security officials said the two men were killed while riding a motorcycle. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media. The attack around

the town of Shehr comes just days after another suspected drone strike in the same area killed five al-Qaida militants. The Interior Ministry said among those killed in that attack was Abdullah Bawazir, the chief architect behind a



A Yemeni soldier stands guard at a street leading to the presidential palace in Sanaa, Yemen.
(AP Photo/Hani Mohammed)

mass prison break last year that freed dozens of fighters who then took arms against the government and helped administer al-

Qaida rule in the south. The group overran entire towns and villages in southern Yemen last year by taking advantage of a security lapse during nationwide protests that eventually ousted the country's longtime ruler. Backed by the U.S. military, Yemen's army was able to regain control of the region but al-Qaida militants continue to launch deadly attacks against Yemeni security forces that have killed hundreds. On Monday, another suspected U.S. drone strike killed two militants in the southern town of Radda in Bayda province, which was also briefly overrun by al-Qaida militants earlier this year. Elsewhere in Yemen, al-Qaida linked tribesmen were believed to be behind an attack on an oil pipeline in the north-eastern province of Marib, just hours after the line was fixed on Friday. □

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Italy's Monti: I'm heading new electoral coalition

FRANCES D'EMILIO

Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Italian Premier Mario Monti announced Friday he is heading a new campaign coalition made of up centrists, business leaders and pro-Vatican forces who back his "ethical" vision of politics, aiming for a second mandate in office if his fledgling reform movement wins big in parliamentary elections.

After a four-hour huddle with his supporters, Monti ended weeks of speculation at home and abroad about whether the internationally respected economist, who was appointed to head a non-elected government a year ago, would seek a new term, this time given to him by the voters.

He told a hastily convened news conference that the Feb. 24-25 ballot list would carry the banner "Monti Agenda for Italy" or a similar slogan, even if the ballot wouldn't list him per se as a candidate. "A new political formation is born," declared Monti, who, as a senator-for-life doesn't have to run for a parliamentary seat.

"Italy must have an evolution in its politics," he said,



Italian Premier Mario Monti speaks during a press conference at the Italian Senate in Rome, Friday, Dec. 28, 2012. Monti has announced he is heading a new campaign coalition made of up centrists, businessmen and pro-Vatican forces, paving the way for his possible return to office if it wins enough seats in February parliamentary elections. (AP Photo/Riccardo De Luca)

Instead of the "traditional axis that consists of right and left" Monti contended that the real axis Italy needs is one "directed at Europe and at reforms to transform our country."

Monti was appointed premier 13 months ago after his scandal-plagued predecessor Silvio Berlusconi failed to stop Italy from sliding deeper into the eurozone debt crisis. He quit earlier this month after Berlusconi pulled his party's support from Monti's government, but is now continuing in a caretaker role until the next elections.

For weeks now there has been speculation about whether Monti would run for the job in February, but he has been unwilling to officially campaign as a candidate. But he could take on the premiership if asked to by whatever party or coalition wins — including the grouping he announced Friday.

"I will watch over the creation of (parliamentary) candidate lists, and for now, I agree to carry out the role of coalition head, and I am working for the success of this operation," the 69-year-old said. □

Putin signs anti-US adoptions bill

JIM HEINTZ

Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — President Vladimir Putin on Friday signed a law banning Americans from adopting Russian children, abruptly terminating the prospects for more than 50 youngsters preparing to join new families and sparking critics to liken him to King Herod. The move is part of a harsh response to a U.S. law targeting Russians deemed to be human rights violators.

Although some top Russian officials including the foreign minister openly opposed the bill, Putin signed it less than 24 hours after receiving it from Parliament, where it passed both houses overwhelmingly. The law also calls for the closure of non-governmental organizations receiving American funding if their activities are classified as political — a broad definition many fear could be used to close any NGO

that offends the Kremlin. The law takes effect Jan. 1, the Kremlin said. Children's rights ombudsman Pavel Astakhov said 52 children who were in the pipeline for U.S. adoption would remain in Russia. The ban is in response to a measure signed into law by President Barack Obama this month that calls for sanctions against Russians assessed to be human rights violators. That stems from the case of

Sergei Magnitsky, a Russian lawyer who was arrested after accusing officials of a \$230 million tax fraud. He was repeatedly denied medical treatment and died in jail in 2009. Russian rights groups claimed he was severely beaten.

A prison doctor who was the only official charged in the case was acquitted by a Moscow court on Friday. Although there was no demonstrable connection to Putin's signing the law a few hours later, the timing underlines what critics say is Russia's refusal to responsibly pursue the case.

The adoption ban has angered both Americans and Russians who argue it victimizes children to make a political point, cutting off a route out of frequently dismal orphanages for thousands. □

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Venezuelans obsess over the future of their leader

ALEXANDRA OLSON

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— He's getting better. He's getting worse. He's already dead. The whole thing is a conspiracy and he was never sick in the first place. The obsessive, circular conversations about President Hugo Chavez's health dominate family dinners, plaza chit-chats and social media sites in this country on edge since its larger-than-life leader went to Cuba for emergency cancer surgery more than two weeks ago. The man whose booming voice once dominated the airwaves for hours at a time has not been seen or heard from since.

His lieutenants have consistently assured Venezuelans over the last week that Chavez is slowly on the mend and will be back at the helm of the country he has dominated for 14 years. But when will he be back? Will he be well enough to govern? What type of cancer does he have? Is it terminal? If so, how long does he have to live?

Government officials have

not answered any of those questions, leaving Venezuelans to their own speculations. The wildest conspiracy theories run the gamut from those who say there is no proof Chavez is even still alive to those who believe



A vendor wearing a T-shirt with an image of Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez sells vegetable at a state-run market in Caracas, Venezuela, Friday, Dec. 28, 2012. The obsessive, circular conversations about Chavez's health dominate family dinners, plaza chit-chats and social media sites in this country on edge since its larger-than-life leader went to Cuba for emergency cancer surgery more than two weeks ago. The man whose booming voice once dominated the airwaves for hours at a time has not been seen or heard from since.

(AP Photo/Fernando Llano)

his illness is a made-up play for sympathy.

"Everything has been a mystery. Everyone believes what they want about the status of his health," said Ismael Garcia, a leftist

lawmaker who belonged to the Chavez movement until a falling-out a few years ago. Vice President Nicolas Maduro read out a New Year message from Chavez to Venezuelan troops on Friday, but for the

fourth day in a row offered no updates on the president's health. Maduro had announced Monday night that Chavez was walking and doing some exercises. The uncertainty comes

with a sense of urgency because Chavez is scheduled to be sworn in for a new six-year term Jan. 10. The government and opposition disagree on what should happen if Chavez can't show up, raising the threat of a destabilizing legal fight. Beyond that, nobody knows if Chavez's deputies, who have long worked under his formidable shadow, can hold the country together if he dies. Like everything else in this fiercely divided country, what people believe usually depends on where their political loyalty lies. Chavez opponents are mostly convinced that the president has terminal cancer, has known it for a long time and should not have sought re-election in October. His most fervent supporters refuse to believe "El Comandante" will die.

"Chavez is going to live on. He is a very important man. He has transformed the world with his ideology," said Victor Coba, a 48-year-old construction worker standing outside a Caracas church as gov-

ernment officials held a Mass to pray for the leader. "Anyone of us will die first before Chavez."

Coba scurried off to a street corner where officials were handing out a book of photographs of Chavez's recent presidential campaign. The comandante's grinning face looked out from the cover, alongside the slogan "Chavez, the heart of my country."

On Christmas Eve, Maduro surprised Venezuelans by saying he had spoken to Chavez by telephone and that the president was up and walking. With no other details, that only set off another round of furious speculation. "I don't think he can be standing up walking," said Dr. Gustavo Medrano, a lung specialist at the Centro Medico hospital in Caracas. "Unless ... there are a lot of lies in this and the surgery was not six hours ... but something else much simpler, much simpler, maybe a half-hour operation, or two hours, something like that and that he is now recovering. That is possible." □



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Champagne loses fizz in Europe after tough year

LORI HINNANT
Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Europeans are finding fewer reasons to pop open a bottle of Champagne as another year of economic troubles and high unemployment saps the region's appetite for the finer things. But while the latest industry figures show that sales might be on the wane in Europe, other markets, particularly Japan and the United States, are developing a taste for a glass of bubbly.

In what is certain to be bad news for the vineyards, France — Champagne's largest market — is drinking fewer bottles. Sales of Champagne for the country were down 4.9 percent, and 5 percent elsewhere in the 27-country European Union, in the first nine months of 2012 compared with the same period in 2011, according to CIVC, the national association of growers and producers of the wine.

Nineteen months of rising unemployment and growing fears that the worst is yet to come have taken their toll on France — nearly seven in 10 French are worried about their country's future, according to a recent poll.

"The French are pessimist by nature," said Antoine Chiquet, whose family has been producing Champagne for three generations and wine for eight. "We had a difficult election, we're in an economy where Europe's foundations are being questioned." Nonetheless, the country managed to drink 175.7 million bottles of Champagne from Nov. 1 2011 to Oct. 31 2012, according to CIVC — enough for nearly 3 bottles a year for every man, woman and child but about 10 million bottles fewer than the previous year. In contrast, the U.S. consumed enough sparkling wine for about 1.5 bottles per person in 2010, the latest figures available from the California-based Wine Institute.

But while the news out of France and Europe is bad, CIVC figures show export

sales were up 3 percent in the first three quarters of the year. Top markets included the U.S., Japan and, to a lesser extent, China. A total of 19.4 million bottles of Champagne went to the United States and 7.9 million went to Japan — the only two countries outside Europe in the top seven export markets. Takayasu Ogata, a Tokyo-based sommelier, said Champagne and sparkling wine consumption is climbing in Japan at a time when overall wine demand peaked about 2000. According to the French figures, Champagne con-

suming alone was up nearly 7 percent over a year there.

according to Ogata, who works at Venture Republic, an Internet retailer, and is in charge of wines. Beer remains the drink of choice for many "salary-men," but younger people and women are taking a liking to Champagne, Ogata says.

"It's about the bubble — a sense of gorgeousness," he said in a telephone interview. "There's that thrill to opening up a bottle of Champagne."

China is also emerging as a potentially strong market for a glass of fizz, although the numbers remain small. In 2011, the latest figures

available, it ranked 19th in export markets for Champagne, apparently because consumers are less discriminating about precise origins. According to an EU ruling, only sparkling wine made in a particular region in northeast France is allowed to carry the name Champagne. The United States makes some exceptions, as long as the labeling is clear.

"People enjoy the 'boom' moment of opening sparkling wine. It is fun. It offers a more festive atmosphere and it tastes good," said said Yu Ming, a 29-year-old who operated a bar in Beijing's Sanlitun nightlife district until 2010. In China, he added, "people call all sparkling wine Champagne. They don't care where it is from or whether the fermentation is inside the bottle."

The sales manager at the BHG supermarket in a luxury shopping mall in Beijing confirmed that Champagne budgets are largely out of reach in China, saying most customers at the chic store will instead choose sparkling wine: "The most expensive Champagne is 7,800 yuan (\$1,250) a bottle at my store, but the most expensive sparkling wine is only



A worker uses a wheelbarrow to carry boxes of Pinot Noir grapes during the grape harvest of Roederer Champagne in Ay, in the Champagne production area of Epernay, near Reims, eastern France. Europeans are finding fewer reasons to pop open a bottle of Champagne as another year of economic troubles and high unemployment saps the region's joie de vivre, latest industry figures show. But while a taste for a glass of bubbly might be on the wane in Europe, other markets, particularly Japan and the United States, are developing a growing taste for sparkling luxury with a brand name.
(AP Photo/Francois Mori)

268 yuan (\$43)," said the manager, who gave his surname, Hou. Chiquet, whose label Gaston Chiquet produces about 200,000 bottles a year, said France and Europe generally will remain the most important markets for Champagne. But for the numbers to climb again "we'll have to rediscover optimism." "Champagne remains a drink for celebrating the big events of life," said Chiquet. "Happily for sales, at the end of the year, the French rely on tradition. Still, we're not going to catch up. Unfortunately, what's lost already is lost."

China requiring people to visit elderly parents

BEIJING (AP) — Visit your parents. That's an order.

So says China, whose national legislature on Friday amended its law on the elderly to require that adult children visit their aged parents "often" — or risk being sued by them.

The amendment does not specify how frequently such visits should occur. State media say the new clause will allow elderly parents who feel neglected by their children to take them to court. The move comes as reports abound of elderly parents being abandoned or ignored by their children.

A rapidly developing China is facing increasing difficulty in caring for its aging population. Three decades of market reforms have accelerated the breakup of the traditional extended family in China, and there are few affordable alternatives, such as retirement or care homes, for the elderly or others unable to live on their own.

Earlier this month, state media reported that a grandmother in her 90s in the prosperous eastern province of Jiangsu had been forced by her son to live in a pig pen for two years. News outlets frequently carry stories about other parents being abused or neglected, or of children seeking control of their elderly parents' assets without their knowledge.

The expansion of China's elderly population is being fueled both by an increase in life expectancy — from 41 to 73 over five decades — and by family planning policies that limit most families to a single child. Rapid aging poses serious threats to the country's social and economic stability, as the burden of supporting the growing number of elderly passes to a proportionately shrinking working population and the social safety net remains weak.



At the Tamarijn All Inclusive:
**Loyrie and Fraser Walsh celebrate
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PUNTA BRAVO – The Walshes from Massachusetts USA, have been coming to Aruba on holidays, every year for the past nineteen, always accompanied by loving family members.

The couple considers the Tamarijn All Inclusive their home away from home, and wouldn't go anywhere else this time a year. For the 2012 edition of their fun trip, they brought fifteen family members and

enjoyed a wonderful multi-generational evening over dinner at their favorite resort. We're all looking forward to your 20th trip, next year, commemorating two decades on Aruba. □



**Buddy the Cake Boss visits
El Gaucho Argentine Grill!**



ORANJESTAD – Our roving photographer caught Buddy the Cake Boss at El Gaucho Argentine Grill, getting ready to enjoy sumptuous dinner and the best steaks in town. Buddy Valastro's of the famous family bakery is a household name here. Much of that success of his reality show series is due to Buddy's charismatic char-

acter and tremendous sense of humor. The show airs on cable television network, TLC, and is very popular on Aruba, where everyone just loves cake! The show, just concluded its 4th season. It follows the adventures of Buddy in his bakery, a family owned business in Hoboken, New Jersey. □

Hyatt Regency Aruba to open authentic Mexican restaurant

- Hotel also renovates signature restaurant, adds spa, incorporates advanced gaming technology to its Casino and makes its swim up bar even better

PALM BEACH, ARUBA (December 27, 2012) – Hyatt Regency Aruba Resort Casino & Spa (www.aruba.hyatt.com) announced today that it will open Mexicado, Aruba's first authentic Mexican restaurant. The family-friendly restaurant will be the first for the island and also the first for the Hyatt brand. It will feature traditional and contemporary Mexican cuisine alongside a dedicated tequila selection. In continuation of the resort's multi-million dollar renovations, it will also unveil the refurbished Ruinas del Mar, its signature restaurant, this month; among other improvements. "We are incredibly excited to offer the island its very first quintessential Mexican restaurant as this is a milestone not only for Aruba, but also for Hyatt," said Fred Hoffmann, General Manager. "2012 also marked a year of improvements at the resort, from the new spa to



upgraded amenities. We are proud of the result and will continuously strive to offer our guests the best possible experience." Designed by The Johnson Studio, Mexicado and the renovated Ruinas Del Mar restaurant will provide guests with two dynamic dining experiences. As they descend into the 5,000 square-foot fresh water lagoon area, diners are greeted by an inviting lounge situated on a floating deck over the existing pool. Adjoining the lounge is Mexicado with its glowing bar, extensive tequila selection and sparkling shot glass chandelier. Ruinas del Mar, one of the most romantic restaurants

on the island, sits nearby. It's surrounded by lush landscaping, waterfalls and a pond filled with Koi fish and black swans. Built out of Calichi limestone from the island's coast, this casually elegant restaurant allows guests to surround themselves in Aruba's gold mining past. Continuing the theme, the ZoiA Spa uses all-natural treatments with native ingredients, hand-pressed oils and home-grown herbs based on four key Caribbean elements – sun, sand, sea and love – and the colors of the Aruban flag – yellow, white, blue, and red. The 5,200 square-foot ZoiA Spa – meaning balance or poise in Papiamentu –

opened in mid-February. It houses eight treatment rooms, many of which offer an indoor/outdoor experience, and also, as an overall theme. Aloe Aruba, the island's only producer of aloe products, is exclusively distributed as a signature amenity line at the resort. The multi-level pool complex also saw a makeover at its bar. The popular swim-up Balashi Pool Bar now features new bar tops and rock work, among its various upgrades. The 8,000 square-foot, three-level pool is part of a complex that includes a three-story water slide, two whirlpools and tropical gardens. Extending the natural look, the hotel's Shoco Market Café now incorporates sustainable woods and finish-

es into its design. The concept by Los Angeles-based firm Indidesign, transforms the space from a coffee and ice cream shop into a full-service market with "made to order" offerings, artisanal sweets, local finds and other brands. Guests looking for a more hands-on experience will revel in the Hyatt Regency Casino with the new Ticket In, Ticket Out (TiTo) system. This new coinless program allows guests to print tickets that can be redeemed for cash or inserted for play in other games. In addition, the resort added 42 new slot machines to the casino floor, bringing the total number to 249. For more information about Hyatt Regency Aruba call 1-800-55-HYATT or visit www.aruba.hyatt.com. □

At the Casino at the Radisson: Leonne Goossens hits the jackpot!



PALM BEACH – The Caribbean Stud Poker at the Casino at the Radisson displayed an amazing \$63,888 Progressive Jackpot until Leonne came along, hitting the Straight Flush, 4-5-6-7-8 of diamonds, and collecting 10% of it: \$6,388 plus

\$500 on her bet! She is pictured here with Casino Supervisor Steve Wingham, who reports the Progressive Jackpot still looks very attractive with over \$57,492, waiting for players to watch it grow, and/or win it. □

Beauty On The Beach

Megan Janer

She is from Michigan. Her first time in Aruba, she is on her honeymoon, staying at Marriott Ocean Club. She loves the Aruban Beach and local food.

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Start 2013 with Balloon Drop at Alhambra Casino



PUNTA BRABO - Alhambra Casino, the friendliest casino on the island is in full preparation for the New Year with its traditional Balloon Drop. Others tried to, but the one best Balloon Drop party is at the Alhambra Casino.

On New Year Eve, all present will receive tiara, hats and beads to be ready to open 2013 with style. After the countdown all present will toast with champagne and welcome the New Year. At exactly 1am all the net with prizes will be

cut and all the balloons will drop in the casino. Catch as many balloons as you can and become the winner of fabulous prizes like cash, baskets, dinners, weekend stay, and much more.

This Balloon Drop party is not possible without the cooperation and courtesy of our vendors, who were very kind to give or exchange gifts with us. These gifts are placed in the balloons and when you break the balloon you can see what gift you won. Alham-

bra takes the opportunity to say THANK YOU to thank our members, the Aruban community and all our visitors for your support during 2012. Also, Alhambra is inviting everybody to be part of the Balloon Drop and win lots of prizes.

We wish you all the best for the year 2013 full of luck. □

American Style Burgers Rule!!

The inspiration for a good American style hamburger comes right from the owners backyard grill. Aaron Walisever – before his 'retirement' – was known as "The King of Fireplaces & Grills" in New England. Moving to Aruba from Sharon, Massachusetts with his wife Rosie was a positive move all around – but their search for a good burger and fries didn't stretch far from home. It was this reason that Rosie & Aaron opened 5 Burgers Aruba! As the name implies, there are 5 specialty burgers offered including a mammoth Western Burger, a tasty melted Gouda Burger, a Farmers Burger complete with a fried egg. For the very hungry, a 3 patty Man Burger and to round out the specials – a zesty chicken breast with special sauce is also available.

Of course, hamburgers and cheeseburgers – small and regular sized are also on the menu. But the big surprise is the hand-cut daily – french fries – from select Idaho potatoes and hand-made onion rings! Cooking these in peanut oil leaves the pure potato flavor in the fry. A favorite way to enjoy fries is with vinegar! These complement any meal ordered at 5 Burgers! Burgers are pressed daily and are U.S.D.A.

choice beef only and lightly seasoned with a special spice blend. They can even satisfy you if you desire a veggie burger. Toppings are encouraged and available at no additional charge – raw or grilled onions & mushrooms, lettuce, tomato, BBQ sauce and many more tasty items. Brand new items to the menu include a hand-made beef empanada and chicken bites. 5 Burgers Aruba is open from Noon to 10-ish daily. Delivery is available to your pool or hotel room! They are located behind Senor Frogs and across from the Radisson Hotel. Come by and enjoy a great burger experience. Rosie & Aaron are often on site – making sure that you are happy with your burger experience! Call 5 BURGERS ARUBA at 586-3904. □





Ohio running back Beau Blankenship (22) celebrates scoring a two-yard touchdown run against Louisiana-Monroe in the fourth quarter of the Independence Bowl NCAA college football game in Shreveport, La., Friday, Dec. 28, 2012.
Associated Press

Ohio whips ULM 45-14 to win Independence Bowl

Ohio whips ULM 45-14 to win Independence Bowl
SHREVEPORT, Louisiana (AP) — Ohio quarterback Tyler Tettleton threw for 331 yards and two touchdowns while Beau Blankenship ran for four scores as the Bobcats cruised to a 45-14 victory over Louisiana-Monroe in college football's Independence Bowl on Friday. Chase Cochran caught three passes for 162 yards and a touchdown as Ohio won their second straight bowl game. Blankenship's four rushing touchdowns set an Independence Bowl record. He added 104 yards rushing. Tettleton was especially sharp in the first half, completing 9 of 14 passes for 215 yards and two touchdowns as Ohio built a 24-7 lead. □

MAKE ME AN OFFER

NHL makes new offer; lockout enters critical stage

Sidney Crosby of the Pittsburgh Penguins participates in a workout at the Ice Den on December 3, 2012 in Scottsdale, Arizona. More than a dozen players from around the league that are not able to play during the NHL lockout have been attending workouts at the Phoenix Coyotes practice rink.
Associated Press

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Rafael Nadal withdraws from Australian Open

JOSEPH WILSON

Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Just when Rafael Nadal's knee had recovered, a stomach virus has forced the Spaniard to delay his return to tennis by another couple of months.

Nadal announced Friday that he will miss next month's Australian Open and probably won't play again until the end of February, saying he needed time to recover from a stomach virus that already prevented him from making his return at Abu Dhabi this week.

The latest setback comes after being sidelined since June with a knee injury, which forced him out of this year's Olympics and U.S.



In this June 10, 2012, file photo, Spain's Rafael Nadal wipes his face as he plays Serbia's Novak Djokovic during their men's final match in the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland Garros stadium in Paris.

Associated Press

Open. He had planned to make his return to the ATP tour at the Qatar Open in Doha next month before the Jan. 14-27 Australian Open, but pulled out of

both events.

While he is expected to recover from the virus in time for the Grand Slam tournament, Nadal and his team said he wouldn't have the proper preparation to play in a five-set event straight away.

Nadal stressed that his decision had nothing to do with the tendinitis in his left knee, which made him take a hiatus since last summer following a stunning second-round loss to then 100th-ranked Lukas Rosol at Wimbledon in June.

"My knee is much better and the rehabilitation process has gone well as predicted by the doctors," Nadal said in a statement from his hometown of Manacor on the island of Mallorca. "But this virus didn't allow me to practice this past week and therefore I am sorry to announce that I will not play in Doha and the Australian Open."

The former No. 1 said he hopes to make his long-awaited return at Acapulco starting on Feb. 27. However, he did not rule out playing at an earlier tournament if his recovery went well.

"As my team and doctors say, the safest thing to do is to do things well and this virus has delayed my plans of playing these weeks," said Nadal. "I always said that my return to competition will be when I am in the right conditions to play and after all this time away from the courts I'd rather not accelerate the comeback and prefer to

do things well."

Nadal's doctor, Angel Ruiz-Cotorro, said in the same statement that Nadal needed at least a week to recover from the virus, ruling him out for the Qatar Open set to start on Jan. 2. Nadal's coach and uncle, Toni Nadal, said it wasn't an option to go straight into a tournament with a five-set format after being sidelined for so long. "We consider not appropriate to play the Australian Open since we will not have enough preparation for a greater competition which is a Grand Slam tournament," said Toni Nadal in the statement.

"It is simply not conceivable that his first event is a best of five sets event, he wouldn't be ready for that."

Nadal's knee injury prevented the 11-time Grand Slam winner from defending his Olympic singles gold at last summer's London Games, where he was supposed to be Spain's flag bearer in the opening ceremony. He also had to pull out of the U.S. Open and Spain's Davis Cup final against the Czech Republic, which his teammates lost without him.

Nadal, who is currently ranked fourth, won the Australian Open in 2009. Last year, he lost to top-ranked Novak Djokovic in an epic final that lasted five hours and 53 minutes, the longest ever match at the event and the longest men's Grand Slam final on record. □

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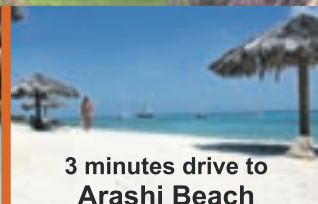
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Puerto Rican boxer Wilfred Benitez hospitalized

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Retired Puerto Rican boxing great Wilfred Benitez has been hospitalized in the U.S. territory after family members worried he might have suffered a stroke.

Yvonne Benitez tells The Associated Press that her brother will remain under observation for 72 hours. She said Friday that the family is awaiting medical tests results but that the 54-year-old Benitez is doing well and reading newspapers and magazines.

Benitez is the youngest fighter to ever win a world title, at 17 years old, but he struggled with traumatic brain injuries later in life. He was previously hospitalized in October 1996 after being found unconscious at home and currently uses a wheelchair.

Benitez's record is 53-8-1, with 31 knockouts. □

NHL makes new offer to players association

IRA PODELL

AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The NHL made a new offer to the players' association, hoping to spark talks toward ending the long lockout and saving the hockey season.

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly said Friday the league presented its proposal Thursday and was waiting for a response. The sides haven't met in person since a second round of talks with a federal mediator broke down Dec. 13.

The lockout has reached its 104th day, and the NHL said it doesn't want a season of less than 48 games. That means a deal would need to be reached mid-January.

"We delivered to the union a new, comprehensive proposal for a successor CBA," Daly said in a statement Friday. "We are not prepared to discuss the details of our proposal at this time. We are hopeful that once the union's staff and negotiating committee have had an opportunity to thoroughly review and consider our new proposal, they will share it with the players. We want to be back on the ice as soon as possible."

A person familiar with key points of the offer told The Associated Press that the league proposed raising the limit of individual free-agent contracts to six years from five — seven years if a team re-signs its own player; raising the salary variance from one year to another to 10 percent, up from 5 percent; and one compliance buyout for the 2013-14 season that wouldn't count toward a team's salary cap but would be included in the overall players' share of income.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because details of the new offer were not being

discussed publicly.

The NHL maintained the deferred payment amount of \$300 million it offered in its previous proposal, an increase from an earlier offer of \$211 million. The initial \$300 million offer was pulled off the table after negotiations broke off earlier this month.

The latest proposal is for 10 years, running through the 2021-22 season, with both sides having the right to opt out after eight years.

A conference call with the players' association's negotiating committee and its executive board was scheduled for Friday afternoon and was expected to last several hours. The lockout has reached a critical stage, threatening to shut down a season for the second time in eight years. All games through Jan. 14, plus the Winter Classic and the All-Star game already have been called off. The next round of cuts could claim the entire schedule.

The NHL is the only North American professional sports league to cancel a season because of a labor dispute, losing the 2004-05 campaign to a lockout. A 48-game season was played in 1995 after a lockout stretched into January.

It is still possible this dispute could eventually be settled in the courts if the sides can't reach a deal on their own.

The NHL filed a class-action suit this month in U.S. District Court in New York in an effort to show its lockout is legal. In a separate move, the league filed an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board, contending bad-faith bargaining by the union.

Those moves were made because the players' association took steps toward potentially filing

a "disclaimer of interest," which would dissolve the union and make it a trade association. That would allow players to file antitrust lawsuits against the NHL.

Union members voted overwhelmingly to give their board the power to file the disclaimer by Jan. 2. If that deadline passes, another authorization vote could be held to approve a later filing.

Negotiations between the NHL and the union have been at a standstill since talks ended Dec. 6. One week later, the sides convened again with federal mediators in New Jersey, but still couldn't make progress.

The sides have been unable to reach agreement on



In this Sept. 25, 2012 file photo, a nearly empty hockey stick rack in the locker room of the Buffalo Sabres hockey team is shown during the NHL labor lockout in Buffalo, N.Y.

Associated Press

the length of the new deal, the length of individual player contracts, and the variance in salary from year to year. The NHL is looking for an even split of revenues

with players.

The NHL pulled all previous offers off the table after the union didn't agree to terms on its last proposal without negotiation. □



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Clippers rout Celtics, win 15th straight game

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Matt Barnes tied his season high with 21 points off the bench, Chris Paul had 11 assists and the Los Angeles Clippers defeated Boston 106-77 on Thursday night, becoming the first team to win 15 consecutive games since the Celtics four years ago.

Fellow reserve Jamal Crawford added 17 points, Blake Griffin had 15 and Caron Butler 14 to help the Clippers improve the NBA's best record to 23-6.

Kevin Garnett scored 16 points for Boston, which never led in dropping to .500 at 14-14 with its fifth loss in seven games. Paul Pierce and Jeff Green added 12 points each to go with 10 apiece from Jason Terry and Rajon Rondo.

Boston's winning streak extended to 19 games in 2008-09.

THUNDER 111, MAVERICKS 105, OT

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Kevin Durant scored 40 points while Russell Westbrook added eight of his 16 points in overtime to help the Thunder beat the Mavericks for their 11th straight win at home.

Serge Ibaka added 19 points and matched his season-high with 17 rebounds as Oklahoma City charged back from 10 points down in the final 7:17 of regulation and found a way to win after losing back-to-back games for the first time this season.

Darren Collison scored a season-best 32 points for Dallas. Dirk Nowitzki scored nine points in his second game back after offseason knee surgery, showing some rust down the stretch.

Westbrook turned the game around with six straight points after the Mavs had gone up 104-101 on Chris Kaman's bucket inside midway through overtime. □



Los Angeles Clippers' Blake Griffin, left, is fouled by Boston Celtics' Jared Sullinger in the second half of an NBA basketball game in Los Angeles, Thursday, Dec. 27, 2012. The Clippers won 106-77.

Associated Press

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ORANJESTAD- Benjamin Petrocchi, a true native Aruban started the newest export product of Aruba, locally produced hand rolled cigars called "Aruhiba". These cigars are produced and cultivated in Aruba. Petrocchi always had a interest in the cigar business and has also sold Premium Cuban Cigars, and now he is growing his own tobacco crops. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba, he started his own production and cultivation of Aruhiba Cigars in Aruba. The whole process took him 10 years to perfect. Petrocchi dedication to the cigars is important for the moulding and process of making a perfect cigar which takes a long time. Their handmade cigar box is specially designed with their "Aruhiba" logo. Petrocchi considers Aruhiba as a promotion for Aruba through its fine cigars. The company sells Aruhiba to the international markets as well. Visit their retail store located in front of the Historic Dutch Windmill in front of the Westin Resort, with any purchase of \$20 and up you receive a free "Aruhiba" cigar or ask for their gift box of 5 cigars get 1 FREE for only \$37. They open from Monday to Saturday from 9 am till 6:30 pm and on Sundays from 9 am to 1 pm. Aruhiba cigars are now available at the gift stores in your resort and at well-known cigar stores. For their complete selection and attractive by the box prices visit their retail store. Tours are also available at their Tobacco farm where their cigars are grown and rolled.



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Baylor overwhelms UCLA Bruins in Holiday Bowl

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Baylor's Glasco Martin ran for three touchdowns while Nick Florence threw for two scores and ran for another as the Bears overwhelmed UCLA 49-26 in college football's Holiday Bowl on Thursday.

In the day's other bowl games, San Jose State capped a big season with a 29-20 win over Bowling Green in the Military Bowl while Cincinnati capitalized on some bad late errors by Duke to beat the Blue Devils 48-34 in the Belk Bowl.

Baylor's Lache Seastrunk rushed 16 times for 138 yards and one score as the Bears outgained UCLA 494 yards to 362. The Bears came in leading the nation in total offense with 387.7 yards per game.

Florence's 188 yards passing gave him 4,309 for the season, breaking Robert Griffin III's 2011 school season record of 4,293.

Baylor's defense came up big, too. The Bears sacked Brett Hundley six times, including two by Chris McAlister.

Baylor won five of its last six games while UCLA lost its final three.

The Bruins were never in this one. Baylor raced to a 21-0 lead by early in the second quarter on Glasco's 4-yard run and Florence's TD passes of 8 yards to Antwan Goodley and 55 yards to Tevin Reese.

In the Military Bowl, San Jose State quarterback David Fales, who led the nation in completion percentage in the regular season, went 33 of 43 for 395 yards and two touchdowns to beat Bowling Green.

Fales led the drive that set up Austin Lopez's 27-yard field goal with 4:43 remaining, and De'Leon Eskridge's 1-yard run with 2:34 left provided the insurance.

San Jose State capped the year with a seven-game winning streak for its first 11-win season since 1940, a remarkable turnaround for a program that was 1-12 just two years ago in Mike MacIntyre's first season as coach.

MacIntyre left earlier this month for a bigger pay-



Baylor coach Art Briles is doused next to an official after Baylor defeated UCLA 49-26 in the Holiday Bowl NCAA college football game on Thursday, Dec. 27, 2012 in San Diego.

Associated Press

day at Colorado, leaving defensive coordinator Kent Baer in charge for the bowl. Bowling Green had a similar turnaround, improving from 2-10 in 2010 under coach Dave Clawson. A defense that allowed only 15.8 points per game in the regular season — ninth-best

among FBS schools — did a decent job against a San Jose State team that was averaging 35.3 points. In the Belk Bowl, Duke let a seemingly certain victory literally slip through its fingers. Duke running back Josh Snead fumbled at the Cincinnati 5-yard line with 1:20

left and Bearcats quarterback Brendon Kay capitalized, throwing an 83-yard touchdown pass to Travis Kelce with 44 seconds to go.

Kay threw for 332 yards and his four scoring passes were a Belk Bowl record.

Duke appeared to have the game in hand and was driving for the go-ahead score — and its first bowl victory since 1961 — but the final 80 seconds proved disastrous. With the game tied 34-34 and the Blue Devils positioning themselves for a winning field goal, Snead fumbled with 1:20 left and Bearcats defensive lineman John Williams recovered.

Kay then connected with Kelce down the middle for the go-ahead score.

Cincinnati sealed it on the next series when Maalik Bomar crashed into Duke quarterback Sean Renfree, forcing a deflection that Nick Temple returned 55 yards for a touchdown. Renfree threw for 358 yards — another Belk Bowl record — for the Blue Devils. □

Wild Oats XI takes line, handicap, race record

HOBART, Australia (AP) — Super maxi Wild Oats XI has added handicap honors to her line victory and race record in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race.

Wild Oats XI, skippered by Mark Richards, achieved the rare race triple on Saturday morning when several other yachts in the running for the handicap honors — which takes into account the size and specifications of the boat — were slowed by dying winds.

The 100-foot-long Wild Oats finished the 628-nautical-mile (723-mile; 1,163-kilometer) race Friday in 1 day, 18 hours, 23 minutes, 12 seconds after leaving Sydney Harbour on Wednesday, 17 minute faster than its previous record time from 2005.

Twelve yachts had finished the race by early Saturday, and 72 of 76 starters were due to complete the distance. □



In this image provided by Rolex, crew on Wild Oats XI prepare to cross the finish line at Hobart, Australia, Friday, Dec. 28, 2012, to take line honors in the Sydney Hobart yacht race.

Associated Press

Personal Health:

Keeping independence in old age-with a little help

JANE E. BRODY

© 2012 New York Times

My 92-year-old aunt, who is cognitively impaired and requires a walker or wheelchair to get around, still lives in her own apartment, where round-the-clock home health aides help her get to and from the bathroom, bathe, dress and undress, and go outside each day for some fresh air. The aides shop, prepare and serve meals, do light house-keeping and make sure she takes her medications on time. But last month, my aunt's long-term care insurance ran out, and her meager savings will soon do the same. Then what?

Her daughters, both of whom work to support their families, cannot afford the \$150 a day for 24-hour care by a certified home health aide, and my aunt has nothing to sell that could bring in the needed cash. Nor does she yet qualify for Medicaid or have a terminal illness that would justify hospice care, which would be covered by Medicare.

Complicating matters, her daughters long ago promised that they would not put her in a nursing home. Such dilemmas are increasingly common as people live longer. The number of Americans 65 and older is expected to double to 80 million in the next three decades. People 85 and older are the fastest-growing age group; by 2020, there will be 6.6 million people in that age bracket, when rates of debilitating ailments soar.

Most Americans older than 65 will eventually need help with the so-called tasks of daily living – eating, dressing, bathing, shopping and the like. But with family members spread all over the map or unable to be full-time caregivers for other reasons, the need for new and better options will only increase.

When asked, 80 to 90 percent of older people say they want to remain in their own homes as long as possible. Yet remaining in one's home indefi-

nately is not always the best choice, even if it is financially feasible. As life draws near a close, many older adults need more care than can be provided safely at home. Simply finding reputable home health aides can be a nightmare, and family members often

are forced to fill gaps in even the best caregiving plans. The challenge is all the more difficult when no one has thought through the options before a serious illness or injury makes it impossible for elders to return home without full-time help. Many elders living

independently need outside help long before they require round-the-clock care. A range of assistance and housing alternatives has rapidly sprung up to meet this demand. Many focus on improving accessibility in the home and access to neighborhood conveniences. An older person living in the suburbs who can no longer drive may become isolated, lonely and at risk of malnutrition if there is no person or community service to shop for her and take her places. Even stairs are a major obstacle. Elinor Ginzler, director of the Cahnmann Center for Supportive Services at the Jewish Council for the Aging in Rockville, Md., writes that "the ability to age in place is greatly determined by the physical design and accessibility of

a home, as well as community features like the availability of nearby services and amenities, affordable housing and transportation options." Organizations like Staying in Place, a non-profit group of volunteers, helps people age 50 and older in Woodstock, N.Y., and surrounding communities "maintain active, independent, fulfilling lives in their own homes." For \$125 a year (plus \$50 for each additional household member older than 50), the organization assists with paperwork and technology; free or low-cost transportation; referrals to discounted service workers; information about, and transport to, local classes and cultural and social activities; and recommendations for home health care agencies and personnel. □



Many older people need outside help long before they require round-the-clock care, and assistance and housing alternatives have rapidly sprung up to meet this demand.

(Yvetta Fedorova/The New York Times)

7-Eleven shifts to healthier options

STEPHANIE STROM

© 2012 New York Times

The chain that is home of the Slurpee, Big Gulp, and self-serve nachos with chili and cheese is betting that consumers will stop in for yogurt parfaits, crudite and lean turkey on whole wheat bread. 7-Eleven, the convenience store chain, is restocking its shelves with an eye toward health. Over the last year, the retailer has introduced a line of fresh foods for the calorie conscious and trimmed down its more indulgent fare by creating portion-size items. The change is as much about consumers' expanding waistlines as the company's bottom line. By 2015, the retailer aims to have 20 percent of sales come from fresh foods in its U.S. and Canadian stores, up from about 10 percent currently, according to a company spokesman.

"We're aspiring to be more of a food and beverage company, and that aligns with what the consumer now wants, which is more tasty, healthy, fresh food choices," said Joseph M.

DePinto, the chief executive of 7-Eleven, a subsidiary of the Japanese company Seven & i Holdings. Convenience stores have typically been among the most nimble of retailers. In the 1980s, they added Pac-Man arcade games

ated dairy cases, with milk, eggs, cheese and other staples. But just as they have taken business from traditional supermarkets, convenience stores have faced increased competition from the likes of Dunkin' Donuts and Starbucks,

last decade as the rate of smoking has dropped in the United States.

Fresh foods can help offset some of those losses. The markup on such merchandise can be significant, bolstering a store's overall profits. It's also a fast-growing category. "If you can figure out how to deliver consistent quality and the products consumers want, fresh food is attractive because margins are higher, and it addresses some of the competitive issues you're facing," said Richard Meyer, a longtime consultant for the convenience store industry. "But it's not easy to do."

7-Eleven has been selling fresh food since the late 1990s. But much of its innovation has been limited to the variety of hot dogs spinning on the roller grill or the breakfast sandwiches languishing beneath a heating lamp. As 7-Eleven refocuses its lineup, the retail chain has assembled a team of culinary and food science experts to study industry trends and develop new products. □



A man looks at an item on a shelves with parfaits, fruit, salads, sandwiches and other food items at a 7-Eleven in New York. 7-Eleven is restocking its shelves with an eye toward healthy food, betting its customers will stop in for yogurt parfaits, crudite and lean turkey on whole wheat bread.

(Chang W. Lee/The New York Times)

as a way to keep customers in stores longer and to buy more merchandise. They installed ATMs a decade later, taking a slice of the transaction fees. More recently, they built refriger-

which offer a basic menu of fresh foods for consumers on the go. At the same time, a major profit driver for convenience stores – cigarettes – has been in steady decline over the

China requires Internet users to register names

JOE McDONALD

Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China's government tightened Internet controls Friday with approval of a law that requires users to register their names after a flood of on-line complaints about official abuses rattled Communist Party leaders.

Authorities say the law will strengthen protections for personal information. But it also is likely to curtail the Internet's status as a forum to complain about the government or publicize corruption.

"Their intention is very clear: It is to take back that bit of space for public opinion, that freedom of speech hundreds of millions of Chinese Internet users have strived for," said Murong Xuecun, a prominent Chinese writer.

The rules approved by China's national legislature highlight the chronic tension between the ruling Communist Party's desire to reap technology's benefits and its insistence on controlling information. Beijing encourages Web use for business and education but tries to block material deemed subversive or obscene. It has steadily stepped up cen-



In this July 14, 2010 file photo, a Chinese man uses a computer at an Internet cafe in Beijing.

Associated Press

sorship, especially after social media played a role in protests that brought down governments in Egypt and Tunisia.

The latest measure requires users to provide their real names and other identifying information when they register with access providers or post information publicly.

"This is needed for the healthy development of the Internet," said Li Fei, deputy director of the legislature's Legal Work Committee, at a news conference.

Li rejected complaints that the public will be deprived of a forum that has been used to expose misconduct.

"The country's constitution protects citizens' rights in supervising and criticizing the state and government officials' behavior," Li said. The measure comes amid reports that Beijing might be disrupting use of software that allows Web surfers to see sites abroad that are blocked by its extensive filters.

At the same time, regulators have proposed rules

that would bar foreign companies from distributing books, news, music and other material online in China. The government has given no indication how it will deal with the technical challenge of registering the more than 500 million Chinese who use the Internet. Microblog operators, two of which say they have more than 300 million users each,

were ordered last year to confirm the identities of users but acknowledge they have yet to complete that task.

The main ruling party newspaper, People's Daily, has called weeks for tighter Internet controls, saying rumors spread online have harmed the public.

The secretive ruling party is uneasy about the public's eagerness to discuss politics and sensitive issues online despite threats of punishment.

In March, authorities scrambled to squelch online rumors about a possible coup amid a political crisis that led to the downfall of a prominent party figure, Bo Xilai, ahead of the party's fall leadership transition. A dozen websites were closed and six people detained.

This week, 70 prominent Chinese scholars and lawyers circulated an online petition this week appealing for free speech, independent courts and for the ruling party to encourage private enterprise. □

Analyst: Apple could pay for Brazil iPhone brand

STAN LEHMAN

Associated Press Writer

SAO PAULO (AP) — Apple Inc. likely will have to pay a Brazilian company for the right to use the iPhone brand in Latin America's biggest country, a Brazilian telecommunications analyst said Thursday.

Brazil's Gradiante SA started selling Android smartphones with the iPhone brand last week after winning the legal right to use the name in Brazil.

"The most likely scenario" is that the two companies will reach an agreement whereby Apple will pay Gradiante for the use of

the brand," said Eduardo Tude, president of Brazilian telecommunications consultancy Teleco.

He said Apple will probably agree because it "doesn't want to stop selling its product in Brazil." Apple spokeswoman Maria Parra Rodriguez said the company would not comment on the matter. Last week, Gradiante said it filed its request to use the iPhone brand in 2000 when it realized "there would be a technological revolution in the world of cellphones with the convergence of voice and data transmission and reception via mobile Inter-

net." In 2008 Brazil's government gave Gradiante the right to use the brand on its cellphones. Brazil's trademark office said Gradiante requested permission to use the brand before Apple did and has the exclusive right to use it through 2018. Gradiante president Eugenio Staub said by telephone that Apple had not contacted his company "even after knowing we were given the right to use the iPhone brand."

Asked if Gradiante would let Apple pay for the right to use the iPhone name, Staub said "at this point we have nothing planned." □



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Stocks continue slide as 'cliff' uncertainty sustains

STEVE ROTHWELL
AP Business Writer
NEW YORK (AP) —

Stocks fell for a fifth day on concern that Washington lawmakers will fail to reach a budget deal before a self-imposed year-end deadline. The five-day losing streak for the Dow Jones industrial average was the longest since July. The Dow dropped 158.20 points, or 1.2 percent, to 12,938.11 points, with losses accelerating in the last 20 minutes of trading as reports circulated that President Barack Obama would not be making a new budget proposal in a meeting with congressional leaders. The Standard & Poor 500 index fell 15.67 points, or 1.1 percent, to 1,402.43, its longest losing streak in three months, and the Nasdaq dropped 25.59 points, or 0.9 percent, to 2,960.31. "The reality, late in the day, is that a deal is just not going to get done," said Ryan Detrick, a senior technical strategist at Schaeffer Investment Research. "We could be greeted by a big sell-off at the start of January." President Barack Obama returned from a Christmas break in Hawaii to meet with congressional leaders at the White House to try thrash out the terms of a deal that would prevent across-the-board tax increases for millions of Americans as well as simultaneous government spending cuts beginning Jan. 1. Those measures, if implemented, could push the economy back into recession, economists say. Stocks closed lower Thursday but erased most of an early loss after Republicans said they would reconvene the House of Representatives Sunday in hopes of piecing together a last-minute budget deal. Traders have been focusing on Washington, and the budget negotiations, since the Nov. 6 presidential election returned a divided government to power. "I can't wait till this is done, so we can start talking about markets again and not just about politics," said Doug Cote, chief market strategist at ING Invest-

ment Management. Cote doesn't expect lawmakers will manage to reach a deal before the deadline and says that when people assess the extent of tax increases on the way, "the market is going reel." Cote also expects slowing earnings growth to hit stocks. Despite the fiscal gridlock in Washington, major stock indexes are holding on to gains for the

also extended its bond purchasing program, which is intended to lower borrowing costs and encourage spending and investment. Stocks declined despite reports that suggested the outlook for the economy is improving. A measure of Americans who signed contracts to buy homes increased last month to its highest level in two and a half years, the latest sign of

51.6, beating estimates for a gain to 51. Bond prices rose as investors moved money into defensive investments. The yield on the benchmark rise 10-year Treasury note, which falls when bond prices rise, dropped to 1.70 percent from 1.75 percent late Thursday. Among stocks making moves: Hewlett-Packard fell 36 cents, or 2.6 percent, to

US pending home sales rise highest in 2½ years

C. S. RUGABER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A measure of Americans who signed contracts to buy homes increased last month to its highest level in two and a half years, the latest sign of improvement in the once-battered housing market.

The National Association of Realtors said Friday that its seasonally adjusted pending home sales index rose 1.7 percent in November from October to 106.4. That's the highest since April 2010, when a home-buyer tax credit caused a spike in sales. And after excluding those months when the tax credit was available, it's the best reading since February 2007.

The increase followed a 5 percent gain in October and suggests higher sales of previously occupied homes in the coming months. There's generally a one- to two-month lag between a signed contract and a completed sale.

In November, signed contracts to buy homes rose in the Northeast and West, and ticked up slightly in the Midwest. They were unchanged in the South.

Home sales are on track to rise 10 percent this year to their highest level in five years, buoyed by ultra-low mortgage rates and steady job gains. The Realtors' group forecasts that sales may rise in 2013 to about 5.1 million. That's still below the more than 5.5 million that is considered consistent with a healthy market. The housing recovery that began earlier this year is looking sustainable for a number of reasons. The supply of previously occupied homes for sale has finally thinned out and is at an 11-year low. At the same time, more people are looking to buy or rent a home after living with relatives or friends during and in the aftermath of the Great Recession. □



Floor traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange Thursday, Dec. 27, 2012, in New York. The Dow dropped to 12,938.11, with losses accelerating in the last 20 minutes of trading as reports circulated that President Barack Obama would not be making a new budget proposal in a meeting with congressional leaders.
(AP Photo/Frank Franklin)

year. The Dow is up 5.9 percent, the S&P 500 index is 11.5 percent higher and the Nasdaq is up 13.6 percent. Stocks rose in 2012 on optimism that a housing market recovery, coupled with an improving job market, will support economic growth. The Federal Reserve has

improvement in the once-battered housing market. The National Association of Realtors said Friday that its seasonally adjusted pending home sales index rose to its highest since April 2010. The Institute of Supply Management's Chicago-area purchasing managers index for December came in at

\$13.68 after the computer and printer maker said the Department of Justice is investigating H-P's business software unit Autonomy. H-P bought Autonomy for \$10 billion in 2011 and has accused the company's former management of fudging its accounting before the acquisition. □

Predictions from market experts for 2013

The Associated Press

What lies ahead for the U.S. stock market? The AP asked leading market analysts and investment managers where they see the Standard & Poor's 500 index winding up by the end of 2013 and why.

GOLDMAN SACHS:

Year-end target for the S&P 500: 1,575
Reasoning: The "turbulent political environment" that

held back investment 2012 will end. Company revenues will edge higher and earnings will rise.

BARCLAYS CAPITAL:

Year-end target for the S&P 500: 1,525
Reasoning: Capital spending will stabilize and the U.S. will benefit from improved manufacturing competitiveness and an energy boom.

BMO Private Bank

Year-end target for the S&P 500: 1,500

Reasoning: The fiscal drag from higher taxes and lower government spending will offset an accommodating Federal Reserve.

WELLS FARGO SECURITIES:

Year-end target for the S&P 500: 1,390
Reasoning: The U.S. economy flirts with recession, exports decline and investment falls. □



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Wall Street 2012 Year in Review:

A surprisingly good vintage as market logs gains

STEVE ROTHWELL
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — If you'd told investors what was going to happen in 2012 — U.S. economic growth at stall speed, an intensifying European debt crisis, a slowdown in China, fiscal deadlock in Washington, decelerating corporate earnings growth — and asked how the stock market would perform, few would have predicted a good year.

But that's just what they got. The Dow Jones industrial average, the Standard & Poor's 500 and the Nasdaq composite index will all end the year substantially higher, despite losing ground in the final days of year as concerns about the looming "fiscal cliff" mounted.

The Dow is on track for a 7 percent increase, its fourth yearly gain in a row, having started the year at 12,217. The S&P 500, which started the year at 1,257, is up 12 percent, beating the 7.8 percent average annual gain of the past 20 years. The Nasdaq also logged a better-than-average gain, 14 percent. Those returns were higher when dividend payments were taken into consideration. On that basis the Dow returned 10 percent, the S&P 500 index 15 percent and the Nasdaq 16 percent. "There's been a lot thrown at this market, and it's proven to be very resilient," said Gary Flam, a portfolio manager at Bel Air Investment Advisors in California. "Here we are at the end of the year, and it's still relatively strong."

Stocks started the year on a tear, with optimism about an improving job market and a broader economic recovery providing the

backdrop to the S&P 500's best first-quarter rally in 14 years. The index advanced 12 percent by the end of March, closing the quarter at 1,408, its highest in almost four years, with financial companies and technology firms leading the charge. The Dow ended the first quarter at 13,212, logging an 8 percent gain. Apple was one of the star performers of the first quarter and was probably the year's most talked-about company.

The popularity of the iPhone and iPad led to staggering sales growth that helped push its stock up 48 percent to almost \$600 at the end of March. Apple also announced a dividend and overtook Exxon Mobil as the U.S.'s most valuable company. Investors' optimism faded, though. The intensifying European debt crisis and concerns about the impact that it would have on global economic growth prompted a sell-off. Within two months, by the start of June, U.S. stocks had given up the year's gains. Borrowing costs for Spain surged and investors fretted over the outcome of Greek elections that had the potential to pull the euro currency bloc apart. The outlook for growth in China, the world's second-largest economy, also began to weigh on investors'

minds. Economic growth there slowed to 8.1 percent in the first quarter as export demand waned, and investors worried that it would keep falling.

The Dow fell as low as 12,101 June 4. The S&P dropped to 1,278 June 1. The second quarter was also marred by Facebook's



Specialist Christian Sanfilippo works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, in New York. Despite many challenges, 2012 turned out to be a surprisingly good year for stocks. The Dow Jones industrial average, the Standard & Poor's 500 and the Nasdaq composite index will all end the year substantially higher, despite losing ground in the final days of the year as concerns about the looming fiscal cliff mount.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

initial public offering. The stock sale was one of the most keenly anticipated initial public offerings in years, but investors didn't "like" the \$16 billion market debut. The social network priced its IPO at \$38 per share, and the stock started to fall soon after the first

day of trading on concern about the company's mobile strategy.

Facebook closed as low as \$17.73 on Sept. 4 before recovering some of the ground it lost.

Company earnings reports were also starting to make uncomfortable reading for investors. Earnings growth

pean Central Bank, Mario Draghi, pledged to do "whatever it takes" to save the euro.

Speculation that the Federal Reserve was set to provide the economy with more stimulus to prevent it from slipping back into recession also bolstered stocks. The rally even survived a blip when a software glitch at trading firm Knight Capital threw stock prices into chaos Aug. 1.

The firm said the problem was triggered by new trading software it installed. Erroneous orders were sent to 140 stocks listed on the New York Stock Exchange, causing sudden price swings and surging trading volume.

Apple launched the iPhone 5, the latest version of its smartphone, in September, and the company's stock climbed to a record close of \$702.10 on Sept. 19. That gave Apple a market value of \$658 billion, and many analysts predicted more gains lay ahead.

By the time Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke announced Sept. 13 that the U.S. central bank would start a third round of its bond-purchase program, which is intended to push longer term interest rates lower and encourage borrowing and investment, the S&P 500 had surged 14 percent from its June 1 low. □

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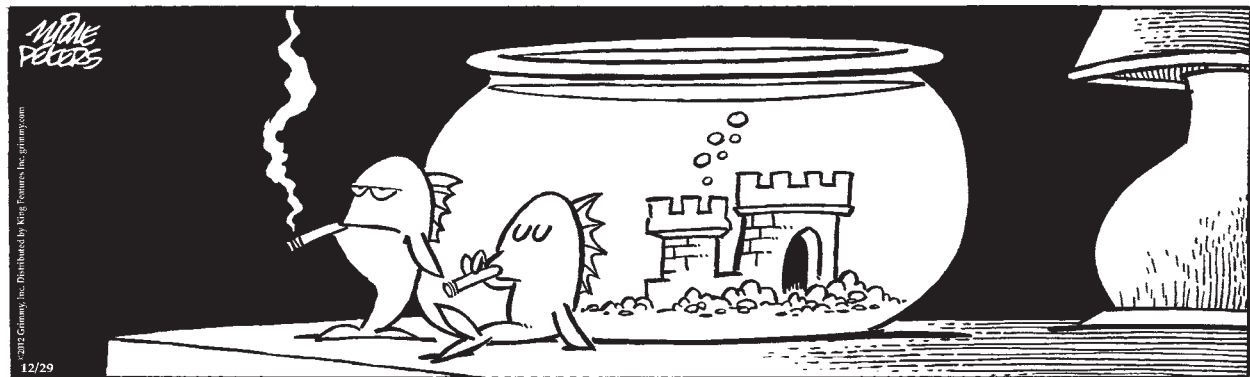
6 Chix



Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

	4		8		6		5	
2	9				4		7	1
5		2						4
				6				
3						5		2
1	6		7				3	8
	5		4		8		2	

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

12/29

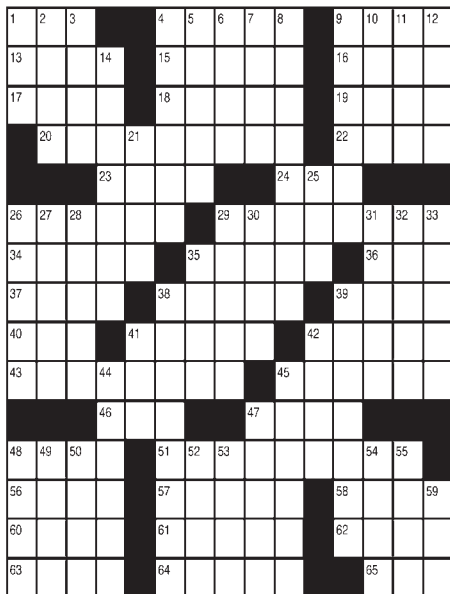
Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

2	5	4	9	1	7	3	6	8
7	9	3	2	6	8	1	4	5
1	6	8	3	4	5	2	9	7
5	3	9	1	7	6	4	8	2
6	8	2	4	5	9	7	3	1
4	7	1	8	2	3	6	5	9
3	2	7	5	9	4	8	1	6
9	4	6	7	8	1	5	2	3
8	1	5	6	3	2	9	7	4

ACROSS

- 1 Sombrero or bowler
4 "Jack ____ could eat no fat..."
9 Just sitting there
13 Was obligated to
15 Excuse
16 Requirement
17 First, reverse or neutral, e.g.
18 One who shuns company
19 Unexpected obstacle
20 "Beat it!"
22 Little child
23 Band-____; sterilized strips
24 Strong alkaline solution
26 Universe
29 Timid & fearful
34 Change slightly
35 "Oliver ____"
36 Sunbeam
37 Coffin stand
38 Lean-tos
39 Trimester or semester
40 TV's "____ Got a Secret"
41 Escape the detection of
42 Altercation
43 Kathmandu residents
45 Embrace
46 Whopper
47 Skating oval
48 Haughty one
51 Becoming terrified
56 Walking stick
57 Clear the slate
58 ____ up; absorb
60 Consumer
61 Fight off
62 ____-in-the-wall; small café
63 Ship's pole
64 Impudent
65 Henpeck



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

12/29/12

Friday's Puzzle Solved

CULP	TRAPS	SOAP
ASIA	RECAP	HUGO
KEPT	OSTRACIZES	
EDS	CUES	AROSE
ERUPT	ELK	
BERATE	TWISTS	
ELVIS	BRIEF	RUT
AVID	FLYER	FARE
DEC	WOODED	RANGE
SECRET	TOSSES	
HIS	PATTI	
OASIS	DANE	TOM
GLISTENING	MORE	
LANE	GAVEL	AREA
ENGL	GEESE	CYST

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12/29/12

DOWN

- 1 Greedy one

- 2 Filis with reverent fear
3 Yellowish wood
4 Crab Louie and coleslaw
5 Trudges
6 Orange peel
7 Cain's brother
8 Hardworking; indefatigable
9 Arch of the foot
10 Refuse to admit
11 Faucet problem
12 On ____; nervous
14 Fantasizer
21 Designer Christian ____
25 Up until now
26 Rustic home
27 Martini garnish
28 Precipitous, as a mountain
29 Stockholm native
30 Conceal
31 Castle or Ryan
32 Indian wraparounds

- 33 Choir songs
35 Consequently
38 Pullman cars
39 Language of Istanbul
41 Actor Wallach
42 Stinky
44 Mr. Einstein
45 Actress Tyson
47 Gets up
48 Filthy slime
49 Space agcy.
50 Singles
52 Region
53 Short rests
54 Midday
55 Celebration
59 Small barrel

Central African Republic to get neighbors' help

HIPPOLYTE MARBOUA
YVES LAURENT GOMA
Associated Press
BANGUI, Central African Republic (AP) — Central African Republic's neighbors agreed on Friday to dispatch a contingent of soldiers to intervene in the troubled country, where a coalition of rebel groups is seeking to overthrow the president of nearly a decade.
Representatives from the 10-nation Economic Community of Central African States meeting in Gabon, though, did not specify how many troops they could contribute nor did they outline how quickly the military assistance would arrive.
President Francois Bozize had pleaded for international help Thursday as fears grew that the rebels would attack the capital of 600,000 next. Former colonial power France already has said that its forces in the country are there to protect French interests and not Bozize's government.
"We are now thinking about the arrangements to make so that this mission can be deployed as quickly as possible, said Gabon's Foreign Affairs Minister Emmanuel Issoze-Ngondet.
The announcement came as military officials in Central African Republic reported renewed fighting in the third largest city of Bambari, which fell under rebel control five days ago. The military said it had taken country of the town, located about 385 kilometers (240 miles) from the capital, a claim that could not be immediately corroborated. The ongoing instability prompted the United States to evacuate about 40 people, including the U.S. ambassador, on an U.S. Air Force plane bound for Kenya, said U.S. officials who insisted on anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the operation.

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Savaneta	584-7000
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Police	582-4000

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BGD San Nicolas	584-1606
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By MATTHEW L. WALD

A black and white photograph of a wind farm. Several large, three-bladed wind turbines are visible, standing in a row across a dark, textured landscape. The sky is clear and light-colored. The turbines are of varying heights and are positioned at different intervals, creating a sense of depth. The overall scene is a typical representation of renewable energy infrastructure.

With the tax credit due to expire, few developers are now taking the early steps required to establish a wind farm, like negotiating deals to sell the power and ordering the equipment. □

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Fans to join Beyonce onstage at Super Bowl

NEW YORK (AP) — All the single ladies — and men — will have a chance to join

Beyonce onstage at the upcoming Super Bowl.

Pepsi announced Friday that dozens of fans will hit the stage when the Grammy-winning diva performs Feb. 3 in New Orleans. A contest that starts Saturday will allow fans to submit photos of themselves in various poses, including head bopping, feet tapping and hip shaking. Those pictures will be used in a TV ad introducing Beyonce's halftime performance, and 50 of those people — along with a friend — will be selected to join the singer onstage. The photo contest — at www.pepsi.com/halftime — ends Jan. 19, but Jan. 11 is the cut-off date for those interesting in appearing onstage with Beyonce. □


Katie Holmes' Broadway play 'Dead Accounts' closes

MARK KENNEDY
AP Drama Writer
NEW YORK (AP) — Katie Holmes' return to Broadway will be much shorter than she would have liked. The former Mrs. Cruise's play "Dead Accounts" will close within a week of the new year. Producers said Thursday that Theresa Rebeck's drama will close on Jan. 6 after 27 previews and 44 performances. The show, which opened to poor reviews on Nov. 29, stars Norbert Leo Butz as Holmes' onstage brother who returns to his Midwest home with a secret. Rebeck created the first season of NBC's "Smash" and several well-received plays including "Seminar" and "Mauritius." Holmes, who became a star in the teen soap opera "Dawson's Creek," made her Broadway debut in the 2008 production of "All My Sons." She was married to Tom Cruise from 2006 until this year. □




This Oct. 23, 2012 publicity photo provided by Pepsi shows Beyonce during a Pepsi Print photo shoot at Canoe Studios in New York.

Associated Press





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FBI removes many redactions in Marilyn Monroe file

ANTHONY MCCARTNEY
AP Entertainment Writer
LOS ANGELES (AP) — Newly re-issued and more complete FBI files on Marilyn Monroe reveal the names of some of the movie star's acquaintances with suspected communists who drew concern from government officials and her own entourage.

But the files, which previously were heavily redacted, do not contain any new information about Monroe's death 50 years ago. The files recently were obtained by The Associated Press through the Freedom of Information Act. The AP had sought the removal of redactions from Monroe's FBI files earlier this year as part of a series of stories on the 50th anniversary of Monroe's death. They show the extent the domestic intelligence agency was monitoring the actress for ties to communism in the years before her



In this February 26, 1962 file photo, Marilyn Monroe and Jean Pierre Piquet, left, manager of Continental Hilton Hotel, are seen lifting their champagne glasses at a reception offered to the visiting star, in Mexico City. Associated Press

death in August 1962. The bureau never found any proof she was a member of the Communist Party. Monroe's file begins in 1955 and mostly focuses on her travels and associations, searching for signs of leftist views and possible ties

to communism. One entry, which previously had been almost completely redacted, concerned intelligence that Monroe and other entertainers sought visas to visit Russia that year. They also reveal that some in Monroe's inner circle

were concerned about her association with Frederick Vanderbilt Field, who was disinherited from his wealthy family over his leftist views. A trip to Mexico in 1962 to shop for furniture brought her in contact with Field, who was living in the country with his wife in self-imposed exile. Informants reported to the FBI that a "mutual infatuation" had developed between Field and Monroe, which caused concern among some in her inner circle, including her therapist, the files say. Field's autobiography mentions that he and his wife accompanied Monroe on shopping trips and meals, and he only mentions politics once in a passage on their dinnertime conversations. "She talked mostly about herself and some of the people who had been or still were important to her," Field wrote in "From Right to Left." "She told

us about her strong feelings for civil rights, for black equality, as well as her admiration for what was being done in China, her anger at red-baiting and McCarthyism and her hatred of (FBI director) J. Edgar Hoover." Under Hoover's watch, the FBI kept watch on the political and social lives of many celebrities, including Frank Sinatra, Charlie Chaplin and Monroe's ex-husband Arthur Miller. The bureau has also been involved in investigations about crimes against celebrities, including threats against Elizabeth Taylor, an extortion case involving Clark Gable and more recently, trying to determine who killed rapper Notorious B.I.G. For years, the FBI files on Monroe have intrigued investigators, biographers and those who don't believe her death at her Los Angeles area home was a suicide. □

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ORANJESTAD - The downtown marina is home of Driftwood Fishing Charters, the successful fishermen of the established seafood restaurant Driftwood in Oranjestad.

Driftwood owner Herby

Merryweather has a love and passion for fishing. A fisherman who knows about fish, what our local waters have to offer, and what the words "fresh seafood" really mean. What Herby catches will be served in his restaurant on the same day. Herby loves to share his fishing passion with the many visitors to the island. His fleet of a 35 ft. Twin Engine Bertram yacht and a 50 ft. Twin Engine Post yacht, appropriately called "Driftwood I and II, is available for charters on a daily basis from 8am to 12 noon and from 1 pm to



Winners of Intl. LUHRS Marina Group Blue Marlin Release Tournament 2009



5pm.
Catch your own dinner
A charter includes: captain, mate, all fishing equipment, bait, sodas and bottled water. On a full day charter sandwiches and snacks are also included. You can call Herby directly at (297) 592 4040 or go to www.driftwoodaruba.com.
Driftwood Restaurant

This authentic Aruban seafood restaurant is located in characteristic downtown Oranjestad. Their extended menu has been jubled by many. Driftwood offers daily specials, as well as a delicious 4-course menu for just \$25.95
Charter deep sea fishing rates:
\$400 - 1/2 day

\$760- full day
Rates per boat
Max. 6 people
Driftwood Restaurant
Authentic Aruban Seafood Restaurant; Klipstraat 12, Downtown Oranjestad
Tel: (297) 583 2515
www.driftwoodaruba.com
Opening hours: every day, from 5pm till 10:30pm.
Sunday Closed.

Is Growth Over?



PAUL KRUGMAN
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The great bulk of the economic commentary you read in the papers is focused on the short run: the effects of the "fiscal cliff" on U.S. recovery, the stresses on the euro, Japan's latest attempt to break out of deflation. This focus is understandable, since one global depression can ruin your whole day. But our current travails will eventually end. What do we know about the prospects for long-run prosperity?

The answer is: less than we think. The long-term projections produced by official agencies, like the Congressional Budget Office, generally make two big assumptions. One is that economic growth over the next few decades will resemble growth over the past few decades. In particular, productivity – the key driver of growth – is projected to rise at a rate not too different from its average growth since the 1970s. On the other side, however, these projections generally assume that income inequality, which soared over the past three decades, will increase only modestly looking forward.

It's not hard to understand why agencies make these assumptions. Given how little we know about long-run growth, simply assuming that the future will resemble the past is a natural guess. On the other hand, if income inequality continues to soar, we're looking at a dystopian, class-warfare future – not the kind of thing government agencies want to contemplate. Yet this conventional wisdom is very likely to be wrong on one or both dimensions.

Recently, Robert Gordon of Northwestern University created a stir by arguing that economic growth is likely to slow sharply – indeed, that the age of growth that began in the 18th century may well be drawing to an end.

Gordon points out that long-term economic growth hasn't been a steady process; it has been driven by several discrete "industrial revolutions," each based on a particular set of technologies. The first industrial revolution, based largely on the steam engine, drove growth in the late-18th and early-19th centuries. The second, made possible, in large part, by the application of science to technologies such as electrification, internal combustion and chemical engineering, began circa 1870 and

drove growth into the 1960s. The third, centered around information technology, defines our current era.

And, as Gordon correctly notes, the payoffs so far to the third industrial revolution, while real, have been far smaller than those to the second. Electrification, for example, was a much bigger deal than the Internet. It's an interesting thesis, and a useful counterweight to all the gee-whiz glorification of the latest tech. And while I don't think he's right, the way in which he's probably wrong has implications equally destructive of conventional wisdom. For the case against Gordon's techno-pessimism rests largely on the assertion that the big payoff to information technology, which is just getting started, will come from the rise of smart machines.

If you follow these things, you know that the field of artificial intelligence has for decades been a frustrating under-achiever, as it proved incredibly hard for computers to do things every human being finds easy, like understanding ordinary speech or recognizing different objects in a picture. Lately, however, the barriers seem to have fallen – not because we've learned to replicate human understanding, but because computers can now yield seemingly intelligent results by searching for patterns in huge databases.

True, speech recognition is still imperfect; according to the software, one irate caller informed me that I was "fall issue yet." But it's vastly better than it was just a few years ago, and has already become a seriously useful tool. Object recognition is a bit further behind: it's still a source of excitement that a computer network fed images from YouTube spontaneously learned to identify cats. But it's not a large step from there to a host of economically important applications.

So machines may soon be ready to perform many tasks that currently require large amounts of human labor. This will mean rapid productivity growth and, therefore, high overall economic growth.

But – and this is the crucial question – who will benefit from that growth? Unfortunately, it's all too easy to make the case that most Americans will be left behind, because smart machines will end up devaluing the contribution of workers, including highly skilled workers whose skills suddenly become redundant. The point is that there's good reason to believe that the conventional wisdom embodied in long-run budget projections – projections that shape almost every aspect of current policy discussion – is all wrong.

What, then, are the implications of this alternative vision for policy? Well, I'll have to address that topic in a future column. □



How Giving Became Cool



NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF
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It was 15 years ago that Ted Turner needed something interesting to say in a speech – and decided, in a rush, to give away \$1 billion.

"I was on my way to New York to make the speech," Turner recalled to me. "I just thought, what am I going to say?"

So, in front of a stunned dinner audience, he announced a \$1 billion gift to U.N. causes such as fighting global poverty.

In nominal terms, before adjusting for inflation, that semi-accidental donation was, at the time, believed to be the biggest single gift ever made, and it has helped transform philanthropy.

Tycoons used to compete for their place on the Forbes and Fortune lists of wealthiest people. If they did give back, it was often late in life and involved museums or the arts. They spent far more philanthropic dollars on oil paintings of women than on improving the lives of real women.

Turner's gift helped change that culture, reviving the tradition of great philanthropists like Rockefeller and Carnegie. Turner publicly began needling other billionaires – including Bill Gates and Warren Buffett – to

be more generous. That was a breach of etiquette, but it worked.

"It's a starting point for me of this modern era of high-profile big public giving," reflected Matthew Bishop, co-author of "Philanthrocapitalism," a terrific book about how the business world is reshaping philanthropy. "He called on others to step up, which did have a crystallizing effect on others. It allowed journalists and others who were talking to Bill Gates to say: 'Why aren't you giving more?'" Then they tormented Buffett with the same question. Ultimately, Gates and Buffett made huge contributions that are transforming the struggle against global disease and poverty.

My hunch is that Gates will be remembered less for his work on personal computers than for his accomplishments against malaria, AIDS and poverty itself.

Gates and Buffett are both now recruiters for the Giving Pledge, which commits zillionaires to give away at least half their wealth. The giving pledge adds to the expectation that those who have won the global jackpot should give something back.

Turner channeled his money through the United Nations Foundation, where it was leveraged to get other contributions so as to bring \$2 billion to finance causes from malaria to polio, from climate change to family planning.

The gift brought new respect to the United Nations and made it increasingly fashionable for billionaires to worry about global poverty.

These tycoons bring not just their checkbooks to the table but also a business sensibility that introduces greater rigor and evaluation to the world of bleeding hearts.

All this has helped shine a greater spotlight on neglected issues – which, in turn, has led

to extraordinary results. A study this month reported that infant mortality around the world dropped by more than half from 1990 to 2010. That's millions of lives saved each year. Of course, not everybody has gotten the memo.

Take Donald Trump, who has contributed his name to a foundation but little more. An investigation by The Smoking Gun website described him as possibly "the least charitable billionaire in the United States," for he apparently gave the foundation just \$3.7 million – over 20 years. Trump, who has said he is worth \$7 billion, is not even the largest contributor to his own foundation.

(A spokesman for Trump suggested that it would be "totally incorrect" to characterize him as uncharitable, saying that he has also donated land in upstate New York for public parks and "millions of dollars" to other causes.)

Turner isn't shy about encouraging others to jump on board. When I asked if he had any advice for my readers, he grew particularly animated: "You don't have to have any money to make a difference; you can pick up trash walking down the street, and I do that all the time," he said.

"You can volunteer your time. You can be a big brother or a big sister."

Look, it makes me a little squeamish to extol a billionaire, for our society already has too much worship of the wealthy – and, in any case, the working poor in America are often more generous in percentage terms (and in volunteering) than those far better off.

That said, it warms my heart that a mogul donated \$1 billion to enliven a speech, didn't even put his name on the foundation and then let the money quietly save lives around the world.

If you're still reading, Donald Trump, it's your move. □

Truffles a buried treasure filled with mystery

EUGENIA BONE

© 2012 New York Times

If you have never bought truffles because, frankly, you do not know how to begin and you are afraid you will get skunked, well, you are not alone.

Serious home cooks and even food pros are bamboozled all the time. It's actually pretty difficult and always expensive to attain good-quality truffles, especially for retail customers. In fact, acquiring truffles is so fraught with potential fraud that you might wonder whether the dining experience is worth the financial risk.

Of course, it's that marvelous odor that makes truffles so desirable. What a shame, then, that many people

complain of having paid a fortune for truffles only to feel like ninnies because the taste just didn't live up to the hype. But that's not necessarily the fault of the consumer.

When it comes to truffles, it pays to know a few facts about the weird biology and the sometimes (OK, often) duplicitous nature of the truffle business.

Truffles are mushrooms that have evolved to grow underground. When the spores of the truffle mature, the fungus produces aromatic compounds that attract animals.

The animals dig up the truffle, and the truffle spores become dispersed. The truffles we prefer to eat have evolved to attract swine



Truffles sold by Rosario Safina, of daRosario, a truffle purveyor, in New York, Dec. 10, 2012. Acquiring mushroom truffles is fraught with potential fraud, but it's their scarcity and marvelous odor that makes them so desirable. (Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times)



(hence the tradition of putting pigs to work hunting them). The truth is, the truffle itself doesn't taste like much.

It is the gas that gives truffles their flavor.

My cousin Mario, a retired barber and white truffle hunter, spends every morning during the fall months trespassing all over the chilly little valley in Tuscany where he lives, directing his feisty dog to sniff under this scrubby willow or that. When she smells a truffle, she starts digging furiously, and Mario has to yank her aside to retrieve what looks, rather disappointingly, like something the dog deposited, rather than unearthed.

Buying truffles and truffle products is a risky business. But good compromises can be made.

Lately I've scratched my truffle itch with D'Artagnan's canned summer truffle peelings. They don't have the punch and pizzazz of white truffles or Perigords, but they have a lovely woodsy flavor. The price is expensive but not impossible, about \$100 a can. I combine them with rich homemade porcini butter to make, as my teenage son would say, swag canapes. And in canapes for a holiday crowd of 50 or more, the price makes more sense. Be warned, however: once opened,

the truffles turn quickly, so eat them within a day or two.

CROSTINI WITH PORCINI BUTTER AND SUMMER TRUFFLES

Time: About 15 minutes

1 1/2 cups loosely packed dried porcini mushrooms
8 ounces high quality lightly salted or unsalted butter at room temperature
Salt

2 French baguettes
1/2 cup canned summer truffle peelings
4 tablespoons minced parsley for garnish, optional
Black pepper

1. Preheat the broiler. Grind dried porcini in a spice grinder, producing about 1/2 cup of powder. The excess will keep for about a year in a jar. Or buy porcini powder online or at some food shops.

2. In small bowl, combine the butter and 4 tablespoons of porcini powder. Add salt to taste.

3. Slice the baguettes into very thin slices. Place on a sheet pan and toast until golden brown on both sides.

4. Spread about 1 teaspoon of porcini butter on the baguette slices. Add a good pinch of truffles, and sprinkle with minced parsley if you like and a few grinds of pepper.

Yield: 48 crostini □

Ruinas del Mar, "Ruins by the Sea"

is Hyatt Regency Aruba's signature restaurant offering contemporary cuisine in an open-air environment. Guests are invited to enjoy menu items such as fresh seafood and steaks, hearth oven specialties, and a display of multiple food stations offered during breakfast, Sunday brunch, and special events.

Open for breakfast daily except Sundays 7:00 am-12 pm

Open for dinner daily except Sundays 5:30 pm-10:30 pm

Open Sundays for Brunch 9:00 am-2:00 pm



For reservation call 297-586-1234 ext. 36 or visit www.aruba.hyatt.com
Hyatt. You're More Than Welcome.